

## Resource Pack

# Developing the Life Skills Element of the Learning Gateway

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# Foreword

Whilst most young people make the transition from school to subsequent learning with relative ease, many do not. The Learning Gateway aims to help those 16-18 year olds who are vulnerable at this transition phase. Some may have been turned off traditional learning by the negative experiences they had at school. Others may face significant personal obstacles such as being without a home or being involved with drugs. The Learning Gateway reaches out to such young people on their own terms and offers them a way back into mainstream learning.

Careers Services and, as they come on stream Connexions Services, have a key role to play in identifying young people who need additional support under the Learning Gateway and ensuring they receive one to one support from a Personal Adviser, to help them overcome the barriers which are preventing them from participating in learning. Personal Advisers provide initial assessment and guidance and, when the young person is ready, they help them to produce an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which sets out the results of the assessment, planned action and the support to be provided.

As a next step, some young people may be able to progress to a Modern Apprenticeship or Further Education course, either directly or following a period of foundation training at NVQ level one or equivalent. Many, however, will need a longer period of additional support under the Life Skills learning option of the Learning Gateway to help them develop their self-esteem and motivation before they are ready to move on.

Learning and Skills Councils are responsible for developing Life Skills opportunities for young people. These allow for a flexible, tailor-made package of activities and support to be put together to meet the identified needs of the young person. The aim of Life Skills is to improve motivation and confidence, develop basic and personal effectiveness skills and provide different work and learning opportunities. There is a common core of basic and key skills development, vocational preparation and personal development but the balance between these elements is determined by the needs and priorities of each individual.

It is vital that Connexions and Careers Services work closely in partnership with Learning and Skills Councils and training providers to help them develop the high quality, flexible Life Skills provision that young people need to get back into mainstream learning. The case studies contained in this Resource Pack are intended to help in this process and highlight examples of emerging good practice in the development of the Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway. We hope that you find them useful.

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## About this Resource Pack

This publication has been produced for local Learning and Skills Councils, Connexions/Careers Services and providers of the Life Skills option, to help them develop good practice in the delivery of the Life Skills element of the Learning Gateway.

It provides a series of 26 case studies which have been developed through discussions with TECs, careers services and Life Skills providers. The case studies highlight emerging good practice in relation to 17 different 'themes'. The themes were identified from a QPID study report published in August 2000, **TECs/CCTEs and the Learning Gateway - QPID Study 87**, which highlighted a number of emerging issues which needed to be addressed further.

Nine case studies are also included of learners who have benefited from their experience of Learning Gateway and Life Skills.

Case study organisations were identified from responses to a questionnaire which was sent to all TECs/CCTEs inviting nominations of organisations demonstrating good practice against each of the identified themes.

The term 'learner' is used throughout this publication and includes 'trainees', and 'clients'.

This publication has been prepared for Department for Education and Employment by Lynne Clough of QGIS Consultants.

## Using this Resource Pack

This pack has been designed to be used by people who want practical advice. The material is presented as individual case studies which have also been included separately on a floppy disk at the rear inside cover. The case studies can then be used individually or in small sets. The table provides a summary of the case studies as a whole. This will enable readers to easily identify those case studies that are of the greatest interest to them.

You will be able to obtain further information from the contact given at the end of each case study. A number of these are at TEC/CCTEs who will hand over responsibility for this work to the local LSC's in April 2001.

Case Study	Organisation	Region	Description
1	Greater Nottingham TEC	East Midlands	Developing Partnerships
2	Walsall TEC	West Midlands	Engaging new suppliers
3	Western Learning Gateway Partnership	South West	Information and data sharing
4	Lincolnshire TEC	East Midlands	Contracting and funding models
5	Family Learning Group, Staffordshire	West Midlands	Innovative provision and location
6	YMCA Training, Widnes	North West	Innovative provision
7	LAWTEC	North West	Individual Assessment and Attendance and length of stay
8	Shropshire CCTE	West Midlands	Individual Learning Plans
9	INCLUDE, Nottingham	East Midlands	Engaging employers in work placements
10	North Lancs Training Group and East Lancashire Careers Service	North West	Monitoring and review
11	Tyneside TEC and Tyneside Careers	North East	Distance travelled
12	CANTO, Northampton	East Midlands	Special needs
13	NACRO and Prospects Careers Service, Sandwell	West Midlands	Post Life Skills support
14	CareerLink, Skelmersdale	North West	Mentoring
15	BESTCO, Nottingham	East Midlands	Group mentoring
16	Rochdale CCTE, Millennium Volunteers and Rochdale Met. Borough Council	North West	Millennium Volunteers
17	Tamcos Training Ltd, St Helens	North West	Pregnant Teenagers
<b>Individuals</b>			
Andrew	Ermal	Richard	
Paul	Phil	Stephanie	
Sarah	John	Ian	

# Introduction - The Learning Gateway

## THE TARGET GROUP

The Learning Gateway was introduced in September 1999. Building on the lessons learnt from New Start and other similar initiatives, it provides a learner centred approach in supporting young people who have drifted away from learning and need additional help to enter mainstream learning opportunities.

Many young people make a successful transition from school to subsequent learning with relative ease. The Learning Gateway targets those 16/17 year olds who are vulnerable at this transition phase. The priority is those who are disengaged from learning but the Learning Gateway also aims to help those who are in danger of dropping out of learning because they lack the right skills, qualifications or attitudes, or because they face significant personal and social obstacles.

Young people in the target group may be disaffected by attitude e.g. as a result of school exclusion, long term truancy or low levels of school achievement. They may be disadvantaged by circumstances or characteristics e.g. homelessness, health problems, care history, family difficulties or offending behaviour.

## THE MAIN ELEMENTS

The Learning Gateway has two main elements:

- a 'front end' supported by Personal Advisers; and
- a 'Life Skills' learning option with continued support from Personal Advisers.

### 'FRONT END'

Connexions/Careers Services are responsible for the 'front end' of Learning Gateway. This covers the vital processes of:

- outreach work to identify those who are likely to need and benefit from the opportunities offered by the Learning Gateway;
- initial assessment to identify learning and support needs including housing, drug addiction or health problems;
- development of an Individual Learning Plan for each young person which shows how their identified needs will be met;
- providing guidance to young people on the different options available;
- liaising with all the agencies who work with each young person;

- providing constant support until the young person is ready to enter education, training or a job; and
- monitoring the young person as they progress.

Each young person is assigned a Personal Adviser who has responsibility for these tasks and works with a case-load of young people. Personal Advisers may also give practical help and support with the completion of application forms, or CV's, arrange placements on courses and programmes or arrange mentors. In some cases Personal Advisers may find it necessary to refer a young person to a specialist agency such as a drugs or housing agency for intensive help before anything else can be considered.

After working with their Personal Adviser some young people are in a position to move into a mainstream option such as further education, training or a job. Others however need additional support before they can do this through the Life Skills option.

## LIFE SKILLS

The Life Skills option allows for a flexible, tailor made package to be put together to meet the identified needs of each young person. This option aims to improve motivation and confidence, develop basic skills, key skills and personal effectiveness and provides opportunities to sample different work and learning opportunities. These elements provide a common core with the balance being determined by the needs and priorities of each learner.

Life Skills involves the use of innovative approaches and locations, for example in local communities, to deliver appropriate help in ways which capitalise on young persons' interests. These could be based around the use of IT, sport, media and the arts or have a focus on environmental and community activities and adapted to suit the learner's preferred learning style. Some young people are content with a more traditional learning environment, for example a classroom or workshop, whilst others prefer practical activities, or using a computer.

Life Skills gives young people the chance to develop at their own time and pace so that they can eventually make the move into education, training or employment. Young people attend Life Skills for a minimum of 16 hours per week although there is no fixed limit regarding the number of weeks which they may remain on Life Skills.

Local LSCs are responsible for contracting the delivery of the customised Life Skills option in their area and ensuring that Life Skills provision is easily accessible to all those who require it. They draw on the services of providers, FE Colleges, the Youth Service, voluntary and community organisations to meet the identified needs of young people. They are also responsible for working closely with Connexions/ Careers Services to agree overall arrangements for the delivery of the Learning Gateway. How these arrangements are to be met are set out in a discrete Learning Gateway Plan. The plan will set out the roles and responsibilities of all partners involved in the delivery of the Learning Gateway.

Key ingredients in ensuring the successful delivery of Life Skills will include:

- Providers which have the skills, knowledge and track record to engage and support disengaged young people participating in Life Skills.
- Providers which can provide innovative learning opportunities in innovative locations which successfully engage learners in the learning process.
- Providers which can work successfully with a range of support agencies to meet the holistic needs of each young person.

- Funding models and arrangements which ensures that providers can provide high quality support and training for learners.
- A flexible approach from funding organisations, in terms of length of learning programmes and attendance hours, which allows providers to meet the specific needs of each learner.
- Effective initial assessment to identify each learner's learning and support needs which in turn informs the development of their Individual Learning Plan.
- Strong working relationships between Personal Advisers and providers which includes the sharing of all relevant information on each learner, including the outcomes of initial assessment, and joint progress review arrangements.
- Providers which can adequately measure the progress of young people participating in Life Skills.
- Providers which can provide variety in Life Skills options, including work experience and volunteering.
- Connexions/Careers Services who have arrangements in place to support young people post-Life Skills.



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# Developing strategic partnerships involving key agencies

When Greater Nottingham TEC (GNTEC) approached the task of planning the Learning Gateway, it wanted to do something new and different. A review of the current training opportunities for the 'harder-to-help' group, revealed that whilst they were working, much more could be done to attract into either work-based learning or further education the substantial numbers of young people that were lost to the system during the transition at aged 16.

There was consensus amongst both training providers, careers services and the TEC that more of the same wouldn't necessarily make the sort of difference that was needed. What was needed was a fresh approach; an approach that better understood the dynamics around exclusion and took advantage of some important developments that were taking place within the City of Nottingham. In particular, it was agreed that the Gateway might offer an opportunity to connect TEC programmes with the broader regeneration agenda that was underway within the conurbation.

## THE CONTEXT

Greater Nottingham, which incorporates the City of Nottingham, is an area of tremendous contrasts. On the one hand it is an economy, which, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has created more jobs than any other City in the UK; another recent national survey confirms that jobs growth in the 1990's was nearly three times the national average. It is also an economy which, whilst managing to retain jobs in the 'old' industries, has also benefited from the creation of many new jobs in the new 'knowledge-based' sectors. Financial services, for example, expanded by 46% during 1991 to 1997. With projections suggesting a further 40,000 new jobs being created over the next ten years, there was much to suggest that the demand for labour will shortly outstrip supply.

On the other hand, the conurbation, and particularly the City, contains wards of immense deprivation and disadvantage. Over 40% of the city's population, for example, live in wards ranked amongst the 10th most deprived in England using the current ILD index. The challenge was, it was agreed, that of ensuring that all the city's residents were helped to share in the prosperity that was being created - a challenge that was further frustrated by the fact the Nottingham City's Key Stage Four results sat towards the bottom of the school league tables.

The Gateway if carefully designed, the TEC believed, could play an important role in attracting into learning those young people who were at risk of remaining at the margins and, more importantly, connecting them with the vast opportunities that were available within the City.

## THE GREATER NOTTINGHAM APPROACH

Rather than contract for the delivery of Life Skills to the established supplier network, GNTEC took the opportunity to work with a network of local community partnerships that had been an emerging feature of the City's regeneration landscape over recent years.

The TEC's plan was to firstly work with each of the partnerships in order to gain an understanding of their priorities, especially in relation to young people. The TEC found that the partnership groups were often in receipt of, and were managing, regeneration funding. As such, they had or were developing plans to connect physical regeneration programmes with strategies for social inclusion.

Within this local strategy context, the TEC's next step was to develop a multi-agency team to support the development and delivery of each of the local Gateway programmes. The emphasis was on including key community-based and voluntary sector groups who had a valuable understanding of their

areas - the opportunities and the challenges. It was through involving staff of youth clubs and community centres that the TEC was able to attract the contribution of voluntary sector groups and other volunteers. The partnerships that emerged, which typically comprised representatives from Guideline Careers Service, the Drugs Action Team, the Probation Service, Area Youth Workers, FE colleges together with locally recruited volunteers and action groups, became powerful forums at which the issues around the content and delivery of local Gateways were determined and agreed.

Central to GNTEC's plan was the allocation of funding to one lead group who would then, in turn, subcontract the funding to other local providers or groups. Whilst this was found to be administratively challenging, the approach did cement the contribution of a wide range of partners, and the Gateway became seen as a programme which valued the contribution of all equally. As part of the model, each Gateway had at least one funded outreach worker, whose role it was to work with young people where they met, and especially out of office hours.

The model allowed the work of the Gateway partnership to inform the work of the community regeneration partnerships and vice versa. As a result, the Gateway became seen as one solution

to the community partnerships broader ambitions. As such, one Gateway attracted SRB funding in order to extend its scope and impact.

## IMPACT

GNTEC's approach has been innovative. There are now 13 community-based Gateways operating throughout the conurbation. All are at different stages of development and all, most importantly, looking very different in terms of priorities and membership - one indication that a sense of local ownership had been achieved.

All the early indications would suggest that a high percentage of young people have progressed either into training, education or employment. A powerful bi-product of the model has been the engagement of agencies with which the TEC had not previously worked with to any significant extent. Most importantly, it has been the positive contribution of such agencies that has enabled the TEC to reach the very hardest-to-help group and has provided the necessary support and encouragement.

The TEC also believes that the model provides an interesting precursor to the launch of Connexions, in that it has encouraged agencies to connect - albeit at a local, area-based level.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Placing Learning Gateway within the local, broader regeneration agenda.
- Engaging community based and voluntary sector groups to bring a different approach to provision for this learner group.
- Working with community regeneration partnerships and seeking to gain an understanding of their priorities.
- The development of strategic partnerships involving key agencies.

**For further information contact:  
Graham Brough at Greater Nottingham TEC on 0115 941 3313.**

**East Midlands Region.**

# Engaging new suppliers to bring a different approach to training provision

When Walsall TEC were planning their arrangements for the delivery of Life Skills they felt that the most critical success factor would be in contracting with organisations who could empathise and work successfully with disengaged young people. Whilst it felt that a number of its existing work-based learning providers could do this, it also felt that it needed to offer something very different from the traditional approaches used in work-based learning programmes, to engage this group of young people. The TEC therefore undertook some preliminary research to identify those organisations who were working with disengaged young people in the local area, and the facilities and services which they were providing. The TEC in turn visited each of these organisations to see at first hand what was being provided.

Valerie Richardson, Walsall TEC's Life Skills Manager explained 'We were looking for a unique environment which young people would want to come to, and feel safe and secure whilst they were there. We also felt that we wanted an alternative type of provision to what we currently offered through our work-based learning programmes. We were looking for an organisation that had the right attitude and experience in dealing with disengaged young people and who could really empathise with them. We also recognised that the skills and experience required by staff in working with these young people would be wide, and extend far beyond training skills and qualifications'.

## THE PROVIDER

The TEC chose to offer a Life Skills contract to T.P. Riley Community Association, an organisation with whom it had not previously worked. Their experience of working with challenging young people in the area, one that has many and complex social needs, placed them in an ideal position to be a forerunner in providing opportunities within the Learning Gateway

T.P. Riley Community Association is a local voluntary organisation whose remit is 'to work with young people giving them opportunities to make informed decisions about their own life'. It undertakes extensive outreach work with young people in the community, identifying what their needs are, and developing specific projects to meet these needs. The organisation is funded from a variety of sources including the community association, the local authority and health authority.

The organisation operates from premises on the High Street in Bloxwich, which is known as 'The Electric Palace'. The building is a former cinema and night club. It contains a number of interview and training rooms and has a large hall facility with stage. The hall is equipped with up-to-date lighting and up to 250 youngsters attend discos on a weekly basis in an alcohol and smoking free environment. It is also used for a variety of projects in the evenings. Young people have been responsible for the decoration of the building and maintain the notice boards within. Life Skills learners are currently planning how to develop a small enclosed space to the side of the building.

The organisation is staffed by a variety of youth workers, counsellors, health workers and tutors who have real experience of communicating and working successfully with young people from a variety of backgrounds, particularly those who had become disillusioned and disengaged from mainstream opportunities. Staff work together in addressing both the development and support needs of Life Skills' learners, adopting a 'holistic' approach to each young person. The organisation has developed close links with other organisations locally to support it in its work. These include Social Services, Housing Associations, Walkways – a drug advisory unit working with young people, and Youth Justice.

Life Skills programmes at the Electric Palace are developed to meet the needs of each learner. Factors taken into consideration include: background, personal needs and circumstances, employability skills, interests, basic skills and IT skills. Much of the work is done on a small group basis, however those needing one to one support are always given this whilst being encouraged to participate in group activities. Fridays are reserved for group activity days where young people themselves devise a programme of activities to participate in. This has included mountain biking, watersports, cinema visits and bowling, all of which have provided important team building activities as well as a reward for attendance and progress.

### THE BENEFITS

Walsall TEC has benefited from working with this organisation, by being able to offer additional professional, experienced, and unique provision for the needs of particularly challenging young people. The Walsall Learning Gateway Key Player Liaison

Group, made up of practitioners from all of the TEC's Life Skills providers together with Personal Advisers, meets every month to identify and share good practice and discuss general and specific issues and concerns. With a wider provider base using different approaches based on previous experience of both TEC funded and other programmes, this has proved to be a very positive and valuable forum indeed in which to identify and share good practice.

T.P. Riley is working with some of the most disaffected young people in the local community. Some have completed the Life Skills element and elected to enter full time employment, training or education.

Eleanor Chell, T.P. Riley's Manager for The Electric Palace and Life Skills believes that her organisation's involvement in the Life Skills programme has allowed them to work on a much more holistic basis with young people than previously. Staff have also developed their own individual skills through the delivery of Life Skills and can apply these to benefit others.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Identification of organisations in the local area who are working with disengaged young people, and the facilities and support which they can provide.
- Using a local community facility provides a less formal training area.
- Engaging a local voluntary organisation as a new supplier, which has a proven track record in working with disengaged young people.
- Experienced staff, with a wide range of skills, working together to the benefit of the young person.

**For further information contact:  
Valerie Richardson at Walsall TEC on 01922 424 242.**

**West Midlands Region**

# Addressing the issue of information and data sharing within partnerships

## THE NEED

The need to address the issue of information and data sharing has been recognised as very important by the Western Learning Gateway Partnership.

‘We saw the sharing of data and personal information between all the key agencies as an essential component of the delivery of each aspect of the Learning Gateway provision, and vital in ensuring that young people receive the support that they need’.

**Ian Fryer, Learning Partnership West**

## THE ARRANGEMENTS

The Partnership has developed a written protocol for data collection which all partners have been involved in. Partners include WESTEC, Learning Partnership West, Social Services, Youth Offending Team, Voluntary Sector, Local Education Authority, Youth Service and Training Providers. The protocol sets out:

### *The management and use of data*

This details the data required to assist strategic planning such as attendance statistics, GCSE results, destinations at 16 and retention rates; learner data to assist Personal Advisers including special educational needs and criteria for recommending Learning Gateway status; and information on Life Skills providers and available options.

### *The role of the partners in sharing data*

This section describes the responsibilities of each partner in making specific data available. The Education Welfare Service for example will supply Personal Advisers with information on individual learners, including details on attendance, special needs and exclusions. Social Services will provide

information on care leavers and other young people who are likely to enter the Learning Gateway. Youth Offending Teams will provide aggregated data on juvenile crime on an annual basis.

### *The processing of data*

This section describes who is responsible for processing data on behalf of all partners, the maintaining of learner records and production of statistical reports.

### *Access to data and data protection*

This section describes arrangements for accessing data and provisions under the Data Protection Act.

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

This section describes the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for all aspects of the Learning Gateway in compliance with the quality assurance procedures. Principles and procedures are identified in relation to accountability, negotiation, confidentiality, impartiality and anonymity.

The development of the actual protocol took some several months to achieve as each partner was involved in gaining agreement within their respective organisation as to what information they would take responsibility for providing.

Whilst the protocol is regarded as essential in identifying and clarifying what information will be shared between organisations its key to success is seen as the building of strong working relationships and trust amongst staff at various levels in each of the partner organisations. One area where considerable work has been undertaken is between Personal Advisers and the staff of training providers. As Matthew Garbett of WESTEC explains,

'Initially it was felt that that the relationship between the two parties was weak. Personal Advisers considered that much of the information gathered in relation to learners was confidential and could not be passed on. Training providers felt that they needed more information on each learner who was referred to them. WESTEC and Learning Partnership West therefore decided to organise a one-day workshop for Personal Advisers and training providers to jointly share concerns and confront relevant issues'.

As a result of the workshop, and further meetings, both training providers and Personal Advisers now feel that an improved working relationship exists.

More information is now shared as Personal Advisers understand the implications of not providing certain information. Both parties have a greater understanding of what each other does and the constraints under which each operate. Personal Advisers and training providers also now conduct joint interviews with learners prior to them joining Life Skills. This enables the sharing of information and also lets the learner see that the training provider and Personal Adviser are working together to their benefit. New arrangements are also being established for a work-shadowing scheme for Personal Advisers and training provider staff. This will allow them to have greater insight into what each other does.

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

- The involvement of partners in seeking agreement within their own organisations as to what information they will provide to the partnership.
- The development of a written protocol to set out clearly what information each partner will provide.
- The building of effective working relationships between Personal Advisers and training providers through training and development events, regular meetings, joint activities and work-shadowing.

**For further information contact:**  
**Ian Fryer at Learning Partnership West on 0117 969 8101**  
**or**  
**Matthew Garbett at WESTEC on 0117 927 7116.**

**South West Region.**



# TECs demonstrating effective contracting and funding models

## BACKGROUND

Lincolnshire TEC has developed effective contracting and funding arrangements with their providers for the delivery of Life Skills. Life Skills is branded within Lincolnshire as 'New Options'.

## THE CONTRACTING MODEL

In Lincolnshire the TEC is using two models to contract with providers. The predominant model is one whereby the TEC contracts directly to a training provider who delivers all elements of the Individual Learning Plan. This model encompasses seven providers some of which operate from more than one site within the county. Contracts have been awarded where providers meet the TECs specified criteria for Life Skills delivery and New Options is delivered from the nine main towns within Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Services also have local centres in each of these towns. Apart from Lincoln and Skegness, there is only one provider in each town. As Lincolnshire is a large rural county one of the issues which the TEC has had to address is the provision of adequate geographical coverage.

The benefits of this contracting model include:

- A short contracting chain which allows maximum use of financial resources to support learners.
- A relatively small number of providers allows the TEC to develop direct and close working relationships.
- Having providers in the same towns as Careers and Guidance Services ensures that providers have easy access to Personal Advisers and vice versa.

- Adequate geographical coverage is provided.

The TEC is using a second type of contracting model for two organisations which have recently become involved in the delivery of Life Skills and are both new to TEC funding arrangements. The first involves the Youth Service who the TEC wished to involve because of their experienced youth workers and their availability of established premises within the community. The Youth Service themselves did not want to become involved as a mainstream provider with all the extra administrative work involved. The TEC therefore facilitated the development of a partnership arrangement with a local College who were already a mainstream provider. The Youth Service now act as a sub-contractor to the College. In the TEC's contract with the College specific arrangements are detailed regarding the funding and delivery arrangements for the Youth Service. A similar arrangement has also been developed between a small theatre company who act as a sub-contractor to a training provider in the south Lincolnshire area. These arrangements allow smaller organisations to develop on a gradual basis through the active support of larger organisations, already experienced in the delivery of government-funded learning programmes.

The benefits of this contracting model include:

- Opportunity to involve smaller organisations with recognised expertise in dealing with disengaged young people who do not have the capacity or desire to become involved as main providers.
- The TEC can focus its time and resources on supporting a small group of providers.



- Linking specialist providers, who have the skills and expertise to deliver Life Skills, with mainstream providers, giving opportunities for young people to progress into mainstream training and education, and making the transition easier. It also places some commitment on the provider to progress the young people within their own range of provision.
- Opportunities to contract for more innovative provision using different approaches. This includes involving practitioners from these organisations in meetings, and joint training events with Personal Advisers to develop the practice of existing providers.

- An on-scheme payment per learner, paid each period.
- A block funding payment paid per period based upon an agreed notional number of places regardless of occupancy.

The block funding arrangement has been introduced because the TEC recognises the difficulties faced by providers in maintaining financial viability where low occupancy exists and what is a relatively small programme. It also recognises that the success of the programme is highly dependent upon the level of staff skills and knowledge within providers, and providers maintaining adequate staffing levels. It does not wish to place its providers in a position where they are constantly having to review staffing levels because of funding difficulties.

## FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Lincolnshire TEC's funding arrangements with providers include the following main components:

- A start payment which is paid for each young person when they join New Options.

In addition the TEC reimburses all learner travel costs in full and has an emergency grant fund to support one-off payments for up to £50 for specific items required by learners. The TEC has a development fund for £50,000 to support the development of the programme including capacity building with providers.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Development of appropriate contracting arrangements to meet the needs of the area and which allow organisations who have recognised expertise in working with the client group to become involved.
- Development of appropriate financial arrangements which ensure that high quality provision is available and can be maintained.
- Introduction of financial arrangements to ensure that provision is available and accessible throughout the county to all young people who will benefit from it.

**For further information contact:  
Maggie Feeman at Lincolnshire TEC on 01522 567 765.**

**East Midlands Region.**

# Delivering innovative training in an innovative location

In North Staffordshire the Family Learning Group is delivering Life Skills in a study centre which is part of Port Vale Football Club.

When the Family Learning Group were planning the delivery of Life Skills they were acutely aware of the positive impact that a non-traditional venue would have on disengaged young people. They recognised that many participants were likely to have low level basic skills together with a social skills deficit and low self esteem. Many were also likely to have dropped out of formal education and therefore a non-threatening environment, very different from a traditional school or college would hopefully appear more attractive. The Family Learning Group therefore sought to identify available facilities within the local community which were both suitable and accessible to the target group. They had already established links with Port Vale Football Club which had a centre available for community use. The centre had been established under the Government Initiative 'Playing for Success' and was thought to be ideal.

The modern study centre is well equipped with 10 computer work-stations which are networked and internet linked. Learners also have use of the football club's gym for sports activities. The football stadium has been utilised in helping to develop learners' numerical skills, through for example measuring and estimating the size of the pitch and calculating the number of seats. Learners have the opportunity to write match reports. This gives them free access to a home football game and assists in the development of written communication skills. Work experience opportunities are currently being developed within the football club in the areas of administration, sports coaching and retail.

Family Learning Group tutors are well experienced in working with disaffected young people. Within the Centre they seek to create a non-threatening learning environment through offering constant encouragement, praise and recognition of each young person's existing skills and potential. Young people are encouraged to respect and support each other in a caring environment and there are a number of important ground rules in place, one of which is that learners are not allowed to ridicule or criticise each other.

Inappropriate behaviour and extreme viewpoints are carefully challenged and discussed. A recent session on "The Experience of Discrimination" enabled learners not only to identify situations in which they may have been discriminated against themselves but also recognise instances where they had been discriminatory.

Young people participating in Life Skills really enjoy going to the centre. One learner summed it up 'I really like coming here because it keeps me off the streets and it is so much easier to learn in a friendly environment'.

Learners are also involved in taking part in 'off-site' innovative learning activities and work together to plan each week's activity. These have included:

- A development activity day organised by the Army to address team building skills. Further development days are being considered with the Police and Fire Service.
- Attendance at a case at a magistrates court to develop knowledge and understanding of law and order.
- The writing of film reviews following trips to the cinema to develop communication skills.
- Activities within the local library to develop skills in research and information gathering. This has resulted in many young people becoming members of their local library.
- Visits to a golf driving range to develop skills in numeracy.
- Visits to a bowling alley to develop team work and numeracy skills followed by an activity to plan, with a defined budget, a fictitious 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the bowling alley.

## THE BENEFITS

One person who has benefited from attending the Family Learning Group's Life Skills programme is Tracy who describes her experience in her own words:

'I am 17 years old and I started Learning Gateway on 26<sup>th</sup> of June and I really enjoy it. I grew up in a very bad area of Stoke-on-Trent, where there are a lot of drugs going around and a lot of violence all of the time. Because of this I have been in trouble with the police a few times.

I missed lots of school because teachers took the mick out of me, for instance, if I did my work wrong they would read it out in front of the whole class and make me feel stupid.

I left school with no qualifications but more than anything I would really loved to have taken Art. I still have lots of sketches and drawings in a portfolio but I wasn't allowed to take Art GCSE because I had too much time off school. So I became a couch potato. I sat around at home and my family were always on my back for me to get a job.

I finally picked up courage to approach a local careers office where I was told about a Life Skills programme at Port Vale Football Club Study centre run by the Family Learning Group. On my first day it took ages for me to walk through the door. I was so nervous I sat in the waiting room for nearly one hour. Eventually I managed to get the confidence to start.

On the Family Learning Groups Life Skills Programme I found out that I'm dyslexic. When I knew about it I felt a bit thick but family and

friends told me I didn't need to because I would get help. My tutors are really brilliant and they always help me with my problems. Now that I know why I have problems with reading and spelling I feel much better in myself. I get extra support every week for literacy and numeracy. If only this had been found out while I was at school maybe I would have attended more and enjoyed my learning and my teachers wouldn't have picked on me.

Since starting on Life Skills I have kept out of trouble and I want to learn and get a good job. Learning at the Football Club doesn't feel at all like school. Every day I look forward to going and wish the programme was all week. Our group is always smaller than in the school classroom and this helps with my confidence. Sometimes, we can choose the subject we want to learn as long as it is part of our learning plan. One afternoon every week we go out and visit different places in Stoke on Trent. I have really enjoyed going bowling, swimming and pool which I had never done before. If we get some extra money we are going to try and go outside of Stoke.

I'd like to stay on Life Skills to build up my confidence, work on my basic skills, and stay out of trouble. I'm hoping to eventually get a job working with elderly people and I now think that getting a qualification is possible.

Now I am doing the Life Skills programme I have kept out of trouble, and I want to learn and get a good job.

I have a long way to go before achieving my goals in life but at least I am trying hard and staying out of trouble.'

**-Tracy**

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Delivering Life Skills in an innovative, non-threatening environment where learners feel comfortable.
- Innovative training approaches which engage learners.

**For further information contact:**

**Pat Staff or Majella Cocks at the Family Learning Group on 07946 485 631**

**or**

**Chris Bamsey or Robert Beddow at Staffordshire TEC on 01782 202 733.**

**West Midlands Region.**

# **Life Skills providers demonstrating innovative training provision to meet the needs of young people, taking account of their views**

YMCA Training in Widnes have developed innovative approaches to training within their Life Skills provision based upon learner's interests.

Christine Morris of YMCA explained: 'Finding the right 'hook' when working with young people on Life Skills is very important. Many have failed to respond to formal learning methods in the past and few are able to concentrate for long periods of time. We have therefore sought to positively identify the interests of those young people with whom we are working and used these to develop different training approaches. We have also identified which training methods, learners are most responsive to'.

Each month, as part of their training activities, learners are asked to identify from a list of activities those which they would enjoy being involved in. The list includes a wide range of individual sporting activities, craft and drama activities, do-it-yourself activities, learning to play musical instruments, visits to local places of interest and activities such as paint balling, ten-pin bowling and ice-skating. The responses are analysed for both male and female learners and used by trainers to plan and organise future activities.

Darts championships have been organised to develop numerical skills for example, whilst football games have been used to develop team work skills, confidence and motivation. YMCA have recruited a part time sports coach to assist with the organisation of sporting activities. Sporting activities have been found to be very useful in helping learners eliminate excess energy, which in turn has helped improve behaviour, fitness and overall health.

Learners have been involved in a project to decorate one of the rooms within the YMCA training centre. This involved them in planning and agreeing the decoration of the room, estimating quantities of materials required, purchasing materials, working within a defined budget and actual decoration. As a result the project allowed learners to develop skills in planning and organising, teamwork, communication and application of number. Learners also took greater pride and care of the room once it had been re-decorated by them.

A group of learners have worked with Galigu, a local theatre group to write, produce and act in a play called 'Bad Town'. This has allowed them to bring together skills such as creative writing, artwork, graphic design, personal presentation and teamwork and develop confidence and self-esteem.

A new project being undertaken is the establishment of a learner committee which will involve learners further in the development and direction of future projects, as well as providing them with a forum for raising any issues of concern. Learners have elected six representatives to form the committee which will meet on a monthly basis. All learners will be encouraged to submit agenda items and suggest ideas. Whilst the committee will play an important role in the operation and development of the Life Skills programme it will also help learners understand the purpose and function of committees in society and the roles of members.

Trainers have found that when working with Life Skills learners some training methods have also proved more effective than others. Learners have been found to have low levels of concentration and therefore lecture style approaches have been avoided. Role play is one method which has been found to be particularly effective and enjoyed learning. Often this has allowed them to learn without them even realising it. Role plays have

been used to act out and share situations which they have encountered within their own lives such as coping with family and peer pressure, family abuse, and dealing with alcohol and drugs. Discussion following role-plays has allowed learners to consider how they would have reacted in such a situation and appropriate behaviour. Other effective methods have included the use of videos and IT.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Actively identifying the interests of young people and using this information to develop different approaches to training.
- Use of innovative approaches involving sport and the arts.
- Using appropriate training methods to engage interest and aid learning.

**For further information contact:  
Christine Morris at YMCA Training on 0151 420 8233.**

**North West Region**

# Flexible arrangements to meet young persons' needs in attendance and length of stay

## BACKGROUND

Jayne Dooley, a project manager at LAWTEC, explains the importance of TECs and providers demonstrating flexible arrangements in delivering Life Skills in terms of the number of hours that learners are required to attend each week and the length of time that they remain on the programme:

'The nature of young people attending Life Skills means that often whilst they may take one step forward they may also take two steps backwards. Many have been outside formal learning for some considerable time and at the same time are faced with a wide range of personal difficulties. Their lifestyles are such that additional needs can arise which often need to be addressed urgently. They may suddenly for example, find themselves without anywhere to live. They may have problems in regularly attending due to drug or alcohol addiction or lack of motivation. They may decide that the vocational area in which they are gaining experience is not suitable for them. It is not possible therefore to say at the outset that an individual's learning and support needs can be addressed within say a 12 week fixed period. Experience has shown that the time a learner spends on Life Skills may be much longer than this but there have also been instances where the time spent has been shorter. What is important is that each learner is recognised as an individual with their own specific needs and that they are given the necessary amount of time required to address their needs.

Flexibility is also seen as important in terms of the number of hours each learner is required to attend Life Skills each week and in the patterns of attendance. Some learners may find it impossible to attend for more than the minimum 16 hours for a number of reasons. Initially they may have difficulty in adopting a regular routine

for example, because they have not attended school regularly for a considerable time. They may have difficulty in concentrating for long periods. They may have responsibilities in terms of family or child-care commitments. Providers are encouraged however to gradually increase learners' attendance hours over a period of time where appropriate, in order that they are properly prepared to enter a mainstream training programme or full-time employment.'

## HOW DO THE FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS WORK IN PRACTICE IN THE LAWTEC AREA?

LAWTEC have produced a written handbook for their Life Skills providers which provides guidance on both the number of required hours of attendance each week and the duration of the programme.

The length of time which a young person remains on Life Skills is stated clearly as being dependent upon the particular needs of each learner. The TEC does provide guidance however in terms of the average length of time which young people have remained on Life Skills based upon historical evidence. If it becomes apparent that a young person has needs which will preclude a positive transfer from Life Skills after 12 weeks, the training provider must sit down and agree with both the learner and the Personal Adviser what further actions need to be addressed. These must be recorded in the learner's development plan along with a realistic length of time to achieve them. LAWTEC believes that it is important that goals are set for each young person along with realistic time scales for these to be achieved. This is seen as an important part of the young person's development. LAWTEC will only question the new arrangements if it feels that inappropriate provision during the first twelve weeks led to the learner's identified needs not being addressed.



LAWTEC's only stipulation on attendance hours is that learners must attend for a minimum of 16 hours each week. In practice however learners will attend for longer than the minimum requirement. Again providers are expected to manage the process in accordance with the needs of each learner. It should not be regarded as automatic that all learners will attend the same number of hours each week or that the length of time which learners remain on the programme will always be the same.

Weekly allowances are only reduced where the learner has not attended for the minimum 16 hours and the young person cannot provide acceptable justification. Authorised absence is at the discretion of the provider. Reasons for absence must be reported on the activity log at the appropriate time.

## BENEFITS TO THE LEARNERS

Two learners who have benefited from LAWTEC's flexible arrangements in hours and length of stay are Peter and Alex, both of whom are training with Beneast Training in Blackpool.

Peter attends for the minimum requirement of sixteen hours per week, as he has the responsibility of looking after his sick mother. Peter's father died four years ago and he missed most of his secondary schooling caring for his sick parents. The flexibility of the Life Skills programme proves sympathetic to Peter's situation should he require a change to his hours or timetable, if his mother requires further care. Peter usually attends for three afternoons and two mornings per week. His work experience is contained within the IT department of Beneast, assisting the tutors, so the flexibility of attendance can be maintained within his work placement. Peter has recently enrolled on a CLAIT course one evening per week and a driving skills course for two evenings per week. He is receiving support in accessing available services and benefits as a carer of a dependant relative. Ultimately Peter hopes to find a part-time job so that he can continue to provide support for his mother, and continue building up his IT qualifications by studying in the evenings.

Alex, recruited under the extended guarantee, has two children aged four and two, and lives with his girlfriend. Whilst he was attending school his family moved around a lot. Frequent changes in schools led to him not attending regularly and he gained no formal qualifications.

Alex began Life Skills in April 2000 on his third attempt. He had previously spent time on the programme but had failed to complete it due to non-attendance. Alex's identified support requirements were increasing motivation, self-awareness, moving on and managing money. He was living in a hostel and was awaiting council rented accommodation and therefore had issues surrounding housing.

Alex has required several extensions to continually support him with his personal development. Initially, Alex was extended after 12 weeks because he decided to change his vocational choice from catering to motor mechanics, as he had had problems with attendance and commitment to the programme. Alex was firmly motivated to try motor mechanics and a placement was identified for him. Not long after he started his placement however he and his family were threatened with eviction from the hostel where they were living which caused attendance problems at his placement. Alex asked to finish at his placement so that he could concentrate on finding somewhere suitable to live and sorting out his benefit entitlements.

Alex was given a further extension to wait on his re-housing and suitable housing was ultimately found. A further placement was then found for him to sample the occupational area of selling car parts. Alex attended this three days per week and thoroughly enjoyed it. His attendance was good.

After 21 weeks on Life Skills Alex had developed his personal and employability skills and decided that he needed to go to College full-time to gain formal educational qualifications.

'If we had not been able to offer flexible arrangements in hours and lengths of stay, both Peter and Alex would have remained unsupported with no clear focus for their future goals'.

**Trainer, Beneast Training.**

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- The recognition of each learner as an individual with their own needs.
- Provision of flexibility in attendance hours and length of stay on Life Skills to meet the needs of learners.
- Objectives and goals set for learners within defined timescales which are reviewed on a regular basis.
- Provision of a handbook which give clear guidance to providers on the contract arrangements for Life Skills.

**For further information contact:  
Jayne Dooley at LAWTEC on 01772 792 111.**

**North West Region.**



# Identifying learners' needs and producing Individual Learning Plans

## BACKGROUND

Shropshire CCTE has contracted with Shropshire Careers Service for the complete delivery of its Life Skills provision. Young people are referred to the Careers Service from a variety of sources including schools, colleges, social services, youth workers, youth offending team and young offender institutions. Personal Advisers are responsible for: the identification of the learners' development and support needs (initial assessment); the drawing up of an individual learning plan which identifies these needs and how they will be addressed; and the sourcing of appropriate provision to meet needs from a range of organisations including training providers, colleges, employers, the youth service, providers of counselling services, leisure centres, voluntary organisations and housing projects. Effective initial assessment is seen as the key to ensuring that learners get the support and training which they need.

## IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNERS' NEEDS

The identification of learners' learning and support needs (initial assessment) begins immediately a young person is referred to, or identified by the Careers Service. Personal Advisers seek to gather as much information as possible regarding the young person from the appropriate referral agency and any other key partners working with the young person. This will include information on the learner's school attendance and attainment, exclusions record, special/medical needs, offending background, post 16 experience, aspirations and any obvious barriers.

The Personal Adviser will then arrange a series of meetings with the young person to further identify their needs and to develop a trusting relationship with them. During the meetings, whilst accentuating the positive, the barriers to accessing

learning are discussed and positive ways of addressing these explored. Ultimately the young person with the help of the Personal Adviser will prepare an individual learning plan. This is a summary of information about the young person, their aspirations and how they intend to achieve these.

Initial assessment continues further when the learner joins the Gateway programme through a two-week motivational/assessment period, spanning 50 hours over the ten days. Learners attend in groups of 8 – 12. The Careers Service believe that to undertake assessment that identifies a young person's ability to cope in a learning setting, it very important to assess young people in a group situation through structured activities over a concentrated period of time.

Yvonne Owen, Manager of the Life Skills Programme for the Careers Service explained: 'To obtain an accurate assessment, the process can not be passive. Along with hard information such as literacy and numeracy skill levels, we need to assess the 'softer' targets and be aware of how young people work together in new situations, their levels of concentration, their levels of motivation and how learning ready they are. This two-week assessment course provides a variety of situations to assess both formally and informally, and at the end of the process the Personal Advisers have a comprehensive insight into both the young person's skills as well as areas that need support'.

The two week programme includes sessions that cover: team building activities, one-to-one input, personal effectiveness, decision making, basic/key skill assessment, opportunity awareness, first aid, health and safety, vocational awareness, life skill options, specialist inputs as required (budgeting, anger management, health, relationships, offending behaviour). Both formal and informal assessment takes place during this period. The

formal tools used are: BeST – the screening toolkit for Basic Skills, a self assessment tool devised with support from NIACE, a learning styles package, psychometric assessment (the AIMS test battery or the Morrisby profile) if appropriate and a vocational interest profile (KUDOS/Adult Directions). These are delivered through individual and group activities to meet the needs of the learner. It is seen as very important that the programme is designed to be both fun for the learner and interactive.

One young person who greatly valued his attendance at the two-week assessment programme was John,

‘I was treated with respect and listened to, it wasn’t like school at all. The two-week course was so good I didn’t want it to end, we all had a really good time and learnt a lot of things about ourselves. I am more confident, can talk in a group and know that there are things I can do. I need help with my reading and writing. Because I do not want to go to college I get help from a mentor - that’s really good. I am also doing some work experience and the people are very helpful. I don’t want a dead end job in a factory so I know I now have to look at training’.

At the end of the programme learners review their progress on an individual basis with their Personal Adviser. Learners are then involved in updating their learning plans based on their progression over the previous two weeks and agreeing what support is required to meet their specific needs. Learning plans have been designed very simply to aid this process. Personal Advisers feel that learners

have much greater ownership of their learning plan where they are actively involved in producing and agreeing them. Learners each keep a copy of their individual learning plan and update their progress on this after each review.

Personal Advisers will source appropriate Life Skills provision to meet the identified needs of young people. They will discuss the needs of the learner with the providers and agree what should be provided. On-going assessment continues whilst the learner attends the Life Skills options. This will be undertaken through observation and a general monitoring of attendance, punctuality, adapting to new situations, working with others, attainment and ability to complete the task in hand.

## THE BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Effective initial assessment has resulted in a number of important benefits:

- Young people understanding themselves better through knowledge of their strengths and development needs.
- Young people playing a major role in the development of their own individual learning plan through understanding their own needs and therefore have greater ownership of these.
- Life Skill’s programmes which are individually designed to meet the identified needs of each learner so levels of motivation remain high.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- In-depth initial assessment, using a variety of techniques, extended over a period of time to develop a comprehensive picture of the needs of each learner.
- Learner involvement in producing and updating individual development plans.

**For further information contact:  
Yvonne Rose at Shropshire Careers Service on 01952 643 070.**

**West Midlands Region**

## Engaging employers in the provision of work placements

INCLUDE in Nottingham have developed effective strategies in engaging employers in the provision of work experience and work tasters. INCLUDE were engaged as a new supplier in November 1999 in recognition of their success in working in the Nottingham area with disaffected 11-15 year olds. INCLUDE is a national charity committed to the inclusion of all young people into mainstream education, training and employment. It runs projects for young people who are out of school or who are not accessing training.

### THE NEED

The provision of work experience is seen as an important option within INCLUDE's Life Skills programme. It provides the opportunity for young people to gain some real work experience, many of whom have not previously had the opportunity. It allows the development of job related and employability skills, and prepares the learner for entering employment. All learners have the opportunity to attend work tasters and placements, which can be up to three days per week according to the needs of the learner.

### DEVELOPING ARRANGEMENTS

When INCLUDE first commenced delivery of its Life Skills programme in Nottingham it did not have established arrangements in place with employers to provide work placement opportunities. It therefore sought to develop a strategy which would successfully engage employers in the programme. This initially involved identifying the types of employers and the methods which could best be used to approach them.

Discussions first take place with learners about the types of work which they are interested in. They are asked to identify the kind of employer they would like to work for and whether they have any specific preferences. Consideration is given to transport routes and how easy it is for learners to travel to certain areas. Learners undertake practical exercises where they are involved in searching

through Yellow Pages to identify possible employers in those locations which are accessible to them. They then write to selected employers explaining the type of work they are looking for and to establish whether there are any placement or employment vacancies. This has the advantage of not only developing learners job search techniques but also their communication skills. In support of each learner's application INCLUDE send a letter to the employer explaining about the Life Skills programme and what is required. A number of learners have been placed with employers following this type of approach.

INCLUDE have also used cold-calling techniques as well as mail-shot activities to develop their links with employers. Each method has been found to have different advantages. Whilst cold-calling has proved more time consuming it has often led to a quicker response from an employer than a mail-shot activity. In contrast, responses from employers to mail-shots have often been much slower but have resulted in identifying employers who are initially interested.

INCLUDE believe that the most important factor in engaging employers is the skills and knowledge of the member of staff who talks directly to the employer. Steve Philips, INCLUDE's Manager explains, 'Placement staff need excellent communication skills. They need to convince the employer of the benefits of providing a placement or employment for a young person. They need to be patient and listen carefully. They must be able to address concerns raised by the employer and overcome objections. They must obtain their trust and confidence. Most of all they need to be persistent and able to quickly overcome rejection when an approach is refused.'

INCLUDE have found that one of the biggest concerns raised by employers is the support that they will actually receive. It is important therefore that this is clearly explained and that it meets their expectations. Some of the arguments which have been found useful in persuading employers have

included: doing something which is of community benefit; a simpler way of addressing recruitment needs and avoiding the need and expense of advertising and interviewing; and raising the profile of the employer.

INCLUDE recognise that the selection of employers is a two-way process and not every employer will be suitable. Employers need to show understanding and concern for the learner and really want to help them. Employers who are simply looking for a 'free pair of hands' are very quickly rejected. All employers are required to meet INCLUDE's stringent health and safety standards.

Maintaining regular contact with employers is seen as vital in developing an on-going positive working relationship. All new and existing placement providers are contacted on a weekly basis, either by telephone or in-person, to check progress and to identify any problems or support needs. Newsletters are sent out to employers providing general information on the programme and success stories. Employers are invited to talk to groups of learners about what they require from employees. Regular contact is maintained with previous placement providers through telephone calls, as they may be able to provide placement opportunities again in the future. INCLUDE write to employers to let them know the progress of a learner where learners decide to pursue other options.

A further important factor in developing positive working relationships with employers is to address any issues that arise quickly and efficiently. Ultimately if the placement is not developing in the way planned for the learner INCLUDE is not afraid to remove them. They always endeavour to maintain a positive working relationship with the employer as it may wish to place other learners in the future.

INCLUDE have developed a management system for recording all contacts with employers. This is seen as vital in managing relationships with employers and ensures that the same employers are not repeatedly targeted during marketing activities.

## THE BENEFITS

Ian is one of INCLUDE's success stories. His placement with an employer led to full-time employment:

'When Steve Philips, INCLUDE's Project Manager, first approached us to take Ian I must admit I did have some reservations. I was worried about the level of commitment and enthusiasm Ian would have for this type of placement. Steve managed to convince us however that he would be there not only to provide support for Ian but also for us. We knew that if we needed him we only had to pick up the phone and he would be there. Ian came to us initially on a two day a week placement to work in the Leisure Centre. His duties included supervision of the swimming pool and main sports arena. He quickly settled in and his attendance was increased to three days. We were impressed with his commitment and enthusiasm. There were some initial problems in providing Ian with enough variety, but these were quickly addressed. Ian had only been with us five weeks when he asked us if he could attend a Life Guards course. As we wanted to recruit a new Life Guard and we knew that he was a good swimmer we agreed that he could. Ian passed the course with flying colours. We were so happy with his progress at the end of his placement that we decided to take him on as a full-time member of staff. He is now studying for an NVQ in leisure and tourism and is progressing well. Steve keeps in regular contact to find out how Ian is getting on'.

**- Mark Stevenson,  
Manager of Portland Leisure Centre**

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Engaging employers to provide work tasters and placement opportunities for Life Skills learners.
- Identifying criteria for the selection of suitable employers.
- Using a range of methods to approach employers.
- Linking learner job search and communication activities with the 'recruitment' of employers.
- Maintaining regular contact with employers through telephone calls, visits and newsletters.
- Maintaining a management system for recording all contacts with employers.

**For further information contact:**

**Steve Philips at INCLUDE, Nottingham Office, c/o Wilford Meadows Comprehensive School,  
Wilford, Nottingham NG11 7AD.**

**East Midlands Region**

# Developing effective arrangements for the monitoring and review of young people

In Lancashire, staff from North Lancs Training Group (NLTG) and East Lancashire Careers Service (ELCS) have developed a close working relationship which encompasses the monitoring and review arrangements for young people on Life Skills.

When the delivery of Learning Gateway and Life Skills was first being planned, a development team involving staff from ELTEC, ELCS and potential Life Skills providers, held several meetings to discuss how all parties involved in delivery could work effectively together. It was felt that this was vitally important in ensuring the young person's progression. The young person needed to strongly perceive this and not see parties working in isolation, as had been the case in the past. The agreed arrangements were ultimately set out in a written protocol, which included four weekly, three-way reviews involving the young person, their Personal Adviser and training provider.

Whilst NLTG review each Life Skills learner every two weeks, the Personal Adviser will also be involved at four weekly intervals. The review covers:

- Discussion of action points from the previous review.
- Progress made during the four week period in relation to learning and support needs.
- Any issues or obstacles which have been encountered.
- Assessment of progress against the overall individual learning plan.
- Objectives and support requirements during the period to the next four weekly review.

A written record is kept of the review, which records action points for each party. All parties receive a record of the review meeting. The individual learning plan will be updated by the Personal Adviser as a result of the review. The learner is very much at the centre of the process and is actively involved in identifying what support and help they require. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the learner has a choice in what is being offered and provided for them.

The benefits of this arrangement are that:

- Personal Advisers and training providers are jointly aware of a learner's progress and any problems that are being encountered.
- There is joint agreement between all three parties on set objectives and support requirements.
- Each party is aware of their own responsibilities and those of others.
- Learners see staff working together from different organisations to meet their needs and not in isolation.

NLTG and ELCS are very keen to stress that contact between staff is not just limited to review meetings. The contact that happens in between, very much supports the review process. Jennifer Herterick, Life Skills Co-ordinator for NLTG explained, 'Typically we will be in contact with our Personal Advisers on a daily basis through either telephone calls, face-to-face visits or where we are jointly involved in a specific activity with a young person for example attending a case conference with another agency or an interview. Any issues that arise in relation to a learner are immediately shared and an action plan jointly agreed. When it comes to the learner's

review we are both fully aware beforehand of their progress and we do not have to spend time first updating each other’.

Lynn Martin, a Personal Adviser with ELCS reports, ‘When we first identify that someone is suitable for Life Skills we will contact the provider to discuss

their needs and requirements. A visit will then be arranged to the provider, which will involve both the learner and the Personal Adviser. In this way the learner sees that there is a relationship in place between the Personal Adviser and the provider right from the beginning’.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Three way review meetings involving the learner, provider and Personal Adviser.
- Documented reviews with action points.
- Updating of the individual learning plan following review.
- Strategic agreement reached regarding the way in which organisations will work together to benefit the young person.

**For further information contact:**

**Jennifer Herterick at North Lancs Training on 01254 392 385**

**or**

**Lynn Martin at East Lancashire Careers Service on 01254 393 316.**

**North West Region**



# Measuring the ‘distance travelled’ of young people in the Learning Gateway

Tyneside TEC, in conjunction with Tyneside Careers have implemented a product from Holland, *Distance to the Labour Market (DLM)*, to measure a young person’s progression and distance travelled from entering the Learning Gateway in the ‘front end’ to entering a mainstream learning opportunity.

DLM is a conceptual framework that supports learners in the development of self and career management skills to enable them to move into learning or employment.

The framework (see page 31) identifies three stages, each with different elements, before the final stage of functioning successfully in a job, training or educational programme.

## Profile and Query Stage

There are five elements to this stage. This includes all actions necessary to identify and engage with appropriate learners, and develop trusting relationships with them. It involves initial guidance and exploration of young persons’ competencies, interests, backgrounds and needs. It requires the Personal Adviser to make clear what they can offer the young person and for the young person to perceive the benefits.

## Indication and Planning Stage

There are five elements to this stage. It involves the identification of learners’ learning and support needs; the actions required to help a young person manage their own life; the setting of objectives and goals; the development of an action plan; and gaining agreement and commitment to the goals and each other’s share of responsibility.

## Realisation stage

There are 12 elements to this stage. It involves further assessment where the need for this is identified; a case review where the help of other organisations is required before further progress can be made; the development of basic skills, personal and social skills, employability skills, and

job search skills; personal orientation to the labour market; linking learning together to help the young person enter mainstream learning; placement into training or work experience; entering employment, education or training and after care.

The framework is progressive through 23 stages but assumes that learners can enter at different stages, or miss out certain stages depending on their previous experience or circumstances.

A series of learner profiles are developed from the three stages of the process. These are:

- Influences Profile.
- Social Profile.
- Health Profile.
- Self-Care Profile.
- Development Needs Profile.
- Self Image Profile.
- Perception of the Learner by others Profile.

Various methods of assessment are used to undertake a comprehensive learner profile including questioning and listening, observation, assessment tests where appropriate, and the monitoring and review process. It is envisaged that the learner’s profile will grow throughout their Life Skills programme as assessment is regarded as a continuous process that investigates and informs:

- Learning capacity.
- Preferred learning styles.
- Management of personal life.
- Attitudes and behaviours within and towards learning and employment.



- Functioning within work situations.
- Orientation towards the labour market/mainstream learning.

The results gathered from assessment situations inform changes in direction towards the ultimate goal. The DLM framework promotes transparency so that the young person has a clear understanding of the purpose of the assessment and the results. Training inputs are based on the outcomes of assessment situations and the commitment of the learner. All planned activities are in relation to the ultimate goal which is always entry to the labour market.

The framework provides a coherent learner management process. At the end of each period Personal Advisers and Life Skills providers are required to identify the stage that each young person (including leavers) has reached. This is recorded on a learner progression chart allowing comparison of progress in previous periods. It also identifies those young people who are failing to make progress and the particular point at which they are encountering obstacles or leaving the programme. The information can be used to analyse and identify the average length of time a young person spends in each phase.

Approximately 200 staff, including Personal Advisers and staff from Life Skills providers, were trained in the DLM framework during the summer of 2000. Learner progression information is currently only available for one period and thus it is too early to draw meaningful conclusions about the progress of each learner. All parties involved in its implementation however are convinced of its potential benefits.

‘We believe strongly that implementation of the DLM framework will allow us to provide a much better service to young people in the Learning Gateway. Analysis of the data gathered from the monthly survey will allow us to identify areas where we may not be meeting the needs of young people participating in Life Skills and will also allow us to target resources more effectively to where they are required. An extra benefit has resulted in the development of stronger relationships between Personal Advisers and Life Skills providers as a result of joint training activities on the DLM framework’.

**- Michelle Hodgson,  
Learning Gateway Manager, Tyneside TEC**

‘The DLM framework has three important benefits. It provides the young person with a clear indication of their progress. It provides an effective case-load management tool for Personal Advisers. It provides managers with information to underpin statistical returns and where Personal Advisers may need support.’

**- Stewart Bowman,  
Learning Gateway Manager, Tyneside  
Careers**

‘The DLM framework has provided both Personal Advisers and Life Skills trainers with an effective communication tool, which is clearly learner focused. Measuring distance travelled will provide a wealth of management information to target resources where they are needed, which will be of great benefit to the learner and the Life Skill Provider Network.’

**- Ralph Brown,  
Head of Life Skills, TVS Training**

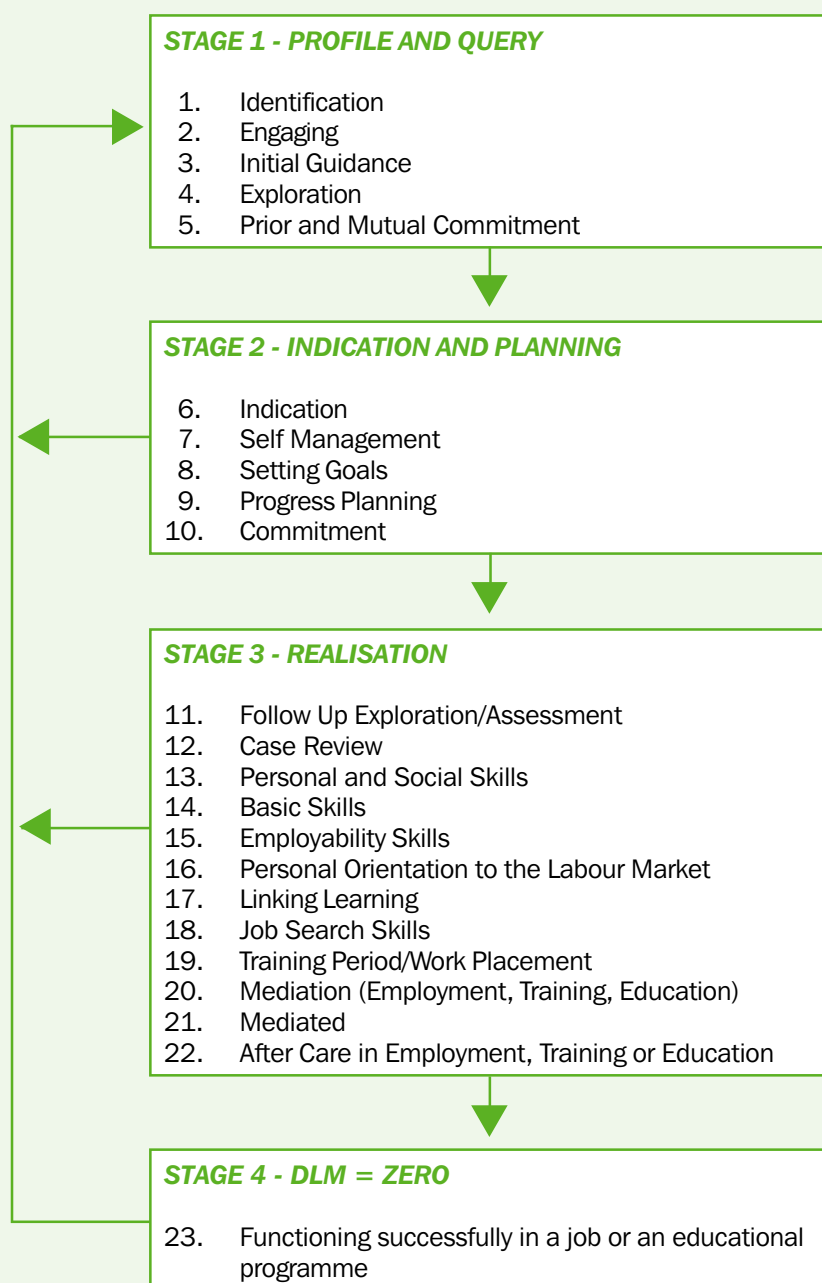
### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Recognition of the importance in measuring ‘distance travelled’ during the Learning Gateway.
- Development and implementation of a framework which focuses on functioning successfully in a job or learning programme as its overall target.
- Strategic approach involving Tyneside TEC, Tyneside Careers and Life Skills providers.
- Joint training involving Personal Advisers, Life Skills providers and Tyneside TEC.

**For further information contact:  
Michelle Hodgson at Tyneside TEC on 0191 491 6000.**

**North East Region**

## DISTANCE TO THE LABOUR MARKET (DLM)– STAGES IN THE PROCESS



## Meeting the needs of young people with special needs

CANTO in Northampton, provide training for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. They have recently established a unit for young adults with autism (UYAA) which is involved in delivering Life Skills. The project has been developed in partnership with Northampton Autism Society (NAS) and with support from Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (NCCTE).

NAS first approached CANTO over two years ago when they were undertaking a study to assess ways in which young people with autism could be introduced into the world of work. NAS were impressed with the programme of employability skills training which CANTO provided for unemployed adults, which also incorporated the opportunity to gain vocational skills in a simulated, realistic working environment. NAS felt that a similar programme would benefit young people with autism. CANTO expressed a willingness to help but felt that they needed to understand more about the type of support that a young person with autism requires. Those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (from mainstream autism to aspergers syndrome) typically suffer varying degrees of impairment of social interaction and communication. Over a two year period staff from CANTO worked closely with staff from NAS to develop their knowledge and understanding. Several discussions also took place with agencies, including Social Services, and potential funders including NCCTE about how such a programme could be established.

When Life Skills was introduced, it was seen as an appropriate vehicle which could be used to support and develop the skills of autistic young people and enhance their employment prospects. A project steering group was established which included members of staff from CANTO, NSA, Career Path, the local Careers Service, and NCCTE. The steering group addressed issues such as: the referral process, the initial assessment process, staffing ratios, staff training, learner benefit issues, payment of training allowances, incentive bonus and options post Life Skills.

The Unit opened in June 2000 and provides training for up to six autistic young people at any one time. Learners attend for 16 hours per week, spread over four days. All learners attend an assessment process at CANTO's centre that lasts two days. A specialist Personal Adviser from Career Path will work with CANTO staff and the learner to draw up their individual learning plan. Training and support is planned on an individual basis to meet the identified needs of each learner. Personal Advisers are involved in reviews which take place every three months.

One learner who is already benefiting from Life Skills is Stephen. Stephen is 20 years old and part of the extended guarantee group. He was diagnosed with severe autism as a child. He lives in a sheltered housing environment for young adults with autism. He joined Life Skills in June 2000 following referral from NAS. His immediate needs were identified as several unsociable traits and a lack of ability to focus on a particular task. Stephen attends Canto's training centre four mornings per week. He is provided with transport to and from the centre. His training and development programme includes vocational skills training and a series of project activities to develop his life skills. He has recently been involved in building a sundial to help him better understand the concept of time and an orientation project within the local town to help him understand how to get from one place to another. He has written down what is regarded as unacceptable social behaviour and this is constantly reinforced by his tutors. The severity of his needs means that he is likely to remain on Life Skills for 12 months before being ready to transfer to an adult work-based learning programme. After four months however he is already beginning to rationalise his behaviour and has begun to communicate with other people. He has started to become more independent and cope outside the sheltered environment, which he has been in for much of his life.

NCCTE have actively supported CANTO in establishing the Life Skills programme. It was identified that a staff, to learner ratio of 1:3 would be required to deliver the programme effectively. The Chamber agreed to provide adequate funding support to allow staff to be trained in the necessary skills. There were issues which needed to be addressed in relation to learners' benefits and in particular whether they would lose other benefit entitlements as a result of receiving a training

allowance, or be penalised if they did not complete their Life Skills programme. A member of the TEC met several times with the Benefits Agency and Social Services to agree that the allowance could be classified as 'therapeutic earnings'. CANTO found this particularly helpful as they did not feel that they would have had the same influence as the Chamber in being able to resolve this issue. NCCTE also supported CANTO in taking responsibility for recording joint meetings and distributing information to key partners.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Development of appropriate and supportive provision for young people who would normally be excluded from suitable training opportunities
- The development of strategic partnerships to plan and implement suitable provision
- Development of an appropriate and committed training provider
- Flexible arrangements to meet the young person's needs in terms of length of stay
- High level of commitment and support from funding body – NCCTE, including development funding, administrative support and leading role in addressing benefit arrangements

**For further information contact:**  
**Barrie Willis at CANTO on 01604 631 826**  
**or**  
**Richard Nutt at Northamptonshire CTE on 01604 671 200.**

**East Midlands Region**

# Supporting young people post-Life Skills

## THE NEED

In Sandwell NACRO and Prospects Careers Services have developed arrangements to support young people after they have completed their Life Skills programme or 'dropped out' before completion.

Jenny Artwell, a Personal Adviser with Prospects explained the need for this:

'Our aim is to ensure that all young people both obtain and maintain a positive outcome in terms of education, training or employment following their Learning Gateway experience. We recognise that the complex nature of problems faced by many young people means that sometimes they will drop out of their Life Skills programme before completion. We also realise that once young people have completed a Life Skills programme and moved on to a mainstream option, that where lower levels of learner support exist, problems may reoccur in their lives or new problems arise, which result in the young person dropping out of that option. Having started to tackle the issues facing the young person we want to ensure that this work is not undone and that the young person remains on an unbroken path towards maintaining a positive outcome independently'.

## THE ARRANGEMENTS

When a young person leaves their programme before completion, the training provider is required to inform the Personal Adviser, and the reasons for this where they are known. Close working relationships have been established between NACRO staff and Personal Advisers, and every effort is made to try and ensure that this situation is minimised through the constant sharing of information. If a young person leaves however, the Personal Adviser will seek to make contact with them through a telephone call, a home visit or physically locating them within the community. The aim will be to bring the young person back into the 'front-end' of the Gateway in order that the issues which led to their leaving can be addressed and a new course of action prepared. In some instances

this may result in either the identification of a new provider who can meet the needs of the learner, or new types and levels of support being made available.

For young people who have completed their Life Skills programme and moved onto a mainstream training option, best practice is for a Careers Advisor to conduct monthly reviews and then act as their Personal Adviser. Prospects have assigned an individual Careers Adviser to work with each training provider in the area. If the Careers Adviser has concerns about the young person they will discuss these with the training provider and appropriate support will be given.

When a young person moves into employment after their Life Skills programme, the Personal Adviser remains in contact with them, until they decide that they need no further support. Where a young person enters a job without training, a member of staff from Prospects' recruitment team will contact the employer, to negotiate access to training on their behalf.

## THE BENEFITS

One young person who has benefited from these arrangements is James. James had attended a Young Offenders Institution for three years before joining NACRO's Life Skills programme. When he joined he found it very difficult to settle because of his institutionalised behaviour. It was also felt that he was high risk in terms of re-offending because of the people he was in contact with. James then decided that he would prefer to attend a full-time college course. NACRO and Prospects worked together to identify a suitable college course for him. James transferred to college but his poor attendance led ultimately to him dropping out. His Personal Adviser spent considerable time trying to locate him after this but with endless persistence eventually managed to do so, and persuaded him to return to the Learning Gateway. She is now working with him to draw up a new development plan which will address all the problems he is faced with.

NACRO uses its outreach workers to support young people who have left its Life Skills programme. Outreach workers work in the local community helping young people achieve and maintain employment, training or education and provide them with appropriate help and support if problems emerge. All young people are made aware of the help and support which is available. For example, this may include help in finding suitable accommodation, support in court cases, obtaining benefits and living independently. One person who has benefited from this is Scott.

Scott was facing a serious court case as he was coming to the end of his programme. As a result he had become marginalised within his family and found himself homeless. His outreach worker

supported him throughout the time leading up to his court case and in finding him accommodation. In the time in which he was waiting to attend court, Scott had transferred to a mainstream provider and was on placement with a local employer. Scott was worried about his employer finding out and as a consequence losing his placement. His outreach worker therefore helped him inform his employer and as a result he did not lose his placement.

As Gary Oliver of NACRO explains 'If Mark our outreach worker had not supported Andrew during what was a very difficult period in his life, he would probably have dropped out of his training programme and lost his chance of a permanent job'.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- The development of arrangements to support young people after they have left Life Skills.
- Implementation of arrangements to follow up young people who drop-out of their programme prior to completion.
- Assignment of Careers Advisers to work with each provider.
- Careers Advisers seeking to access training for young people in employment without training.

**For further information contact:**  
**Jenny Artwell at Prospects Careers on 0121 558 2901**  
 or  
**Gary Oliver at NACRO on 0121 558 1902.**

**West Midlands Region**

# Effective mentoring arrangements for young people

## INTRODUCTION

CareerLink in Skelmersdale, Lancashire has successfully incorporated an existing mentoring programme into Learning Gateway and Life Skills. The Headstart Mentoring Programme has been running for four years and is funded through SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) and ESF (European Social Fund) funding. It has recently been awarded highly commended status in the 2000 National Careers Awards.

The project was initiated to raise young peoples' aspirations in gaining employment and to develop their employability skills through the provision of a positive role model. Skelmersdale suffers high levels of both youth and long-term unemployment. Unemployment is common across more than one generation. The lack of job opportunities lies at the heart of low aspirations among young people. The project focuses primarily on unemployed 16-24 year olds who are socially excluded, disaffected by attitude or disadvantaged by circumstances.

## HOW DO MENTORING ARRANGEMENTS WORK?

Mentors are responsible for:

- Encouraging young people to recognise their existing strengths and skills
- Encouraging young people to develop their confidence and communication skills
- Listening to and valuing young peoples' opinions and beliefs
- Talking about the world of work and the personal skills which are needed to be successful in the workplace

'Finding suitable people to act as mentors is not an easy task', explained Stella Connell, the Mentoring Project Co-ordinator. 'We feel that is very important for each young person to have a mentor who is in employment so that they can provide a positive role model. Ideally we are looking for mentors who perhaps started their own careers at a junior level and have risen to management positions. We approach local companies which we feel will be fully committed to supporting their members of staff in undertaking this role. Each mentor will spend a minimum of two hours per month with their mentee, usually in their workplace, and may also be involved in networking meetings with other mentors or receiving support from the mentoring co-ordinator. There are important benefits for the companies involved however. In addition to contributing to the local community, their staff are developing positive transferable skills which can be used back in the workplace. All mentors are offered the chance of gaining the TDLB C26 & D11 units in mentoring at no cost to the employer'.

Staff within companies who express interest in becoming mentors are invited for discussions. This is seen as a two-way process with the mentoring co-ordinator seeking to identify whether the person has the relevant skills and attitude, and the prospective mentor seeking to understand what is required of them. Successful mentors need to be approachable, interested, good listeners, non-judgemental, reliable, a role model and have a positive outlook.

All those selected to become mentors attend an induction and training programme. This includes sessions on what is the mentor's role, handling and planning sessions and communication skills.

The matching of a suitable mentor with a mentee is regarded as the most critical part of the mentoring process. It is vitally important that an



effective relationship is established early. The matching process involves consideration of a number of factors including the person's sex, personality, interests and circumstances. CareerLink has recently arranged for four single parents to mentor four single women in a women's refuge.

Within Learning Gateway and Life Skills, mentors play a complementary role to the work of Personal Advisers and providers. They work with young people on an individual basis giving up their time voluntarily and focusing upon the development of employability skills and raising young peoples' aspirations. It is important that they are aware of the work being undertaken by the Personal Adviser and the provider. Each young person is offered the opportunity of having a mentor whilst they are in the 'front end'. The Personal Adviser is involved in the first meeting between the mentor and mentee. The different roles are explained and agreement is reached on what information can be shared between all parties. A mentoring action plan is drawn up which forms part of the individual learning plan. For those young people who join Life Skills their mentor is introduced by the Personal Adviser to the provider and their role explained.

Some young people have work experience placements organised by their mentor, which can form part of their Life Skills programme. One young woman who wants to train in child care is mentored by an experienced Nursery Nurse. She spends some time each week working along side her mentor gaining valuable skills in a supportive environment.

## BENEFITS

CareerLink has identified several important benefits in providing young people with mentors. There is clear evidence to show that those with mentors are less likely to drop out of their programmes before completion and achieve a positive outcome.

One person joining Learning Gateway who has benefited from having a mentor is Matthew. When Matthew joined he was very demotivated, lacked confidence and was not interested in gaining a job. He was interested however in football and outdoor pursuits. A local Bank Manager, Stewart, was identified as Matthew's mentor. Stewart had been a semi-professional footballer before his career in the Bank and it was felt that he could provide an important role model in Matthew's life. Matthew and Stewart began meeting regularly at the Bank and a positive relationship developed. Matthew began a Life Skills programme with Training West Lancashire where he received further support in improving his confidence and motivation. Stewart helped Matthew in particular with gaining confidence and improving self esteem. He also enabled Matthew to see he could be a success both on a personal level and also in the work place.

'I felt Stewart was always there for me. When things got rough and I wanted to pack everything in I'd always talk it over with Stewart. Without Stewart I don't think I would have tried or stuck at anything'.

**- Matthew**

Whilst at Training West Lancashire, Matthew began a placement with a local outdoor pursuits centre, where he recently transferred to undertake a mainstream training programme.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- The introduction of mentors to provide additional support to young people throughout the Learning Gateway.
- The provision of training and development for mentors.
- The careful selection and matching of mentors with learners.

**For further information contact  
Mary Livesey, Service Manager at CareerLink on 01695 729267 or 724557.**

**North West Region**



# Developing effective group mentoring arrangements for young people

## BACKGROUND

BESTCO are a private non-profit making organisation working with disadvantaged young people and adults in the inner city area of Nottingham. They have been involved in delivering Life Skills since September 1999. As part of its Life Skills provision BESTCO have introduced a group mentoring scheme with the help of BUILD, a local organisation which works within the black community, developing mentoring programmes and providing training for young people in subjects such as cultural diversity. As a result of the partnership BUILD have seconded a full time worker to BESTCO to develop the mentoring programme and to undertake outreach work within the local community.

## GROUP MENTORING PROGRAMME

BESTCO wanted to introduce a group mentoring programme as an additional support mechanism for young people participating in Life Skills and in particular to help them improve their self-esteem and confidence. The mentoring programme aimed to introduce positive role models into group learning situations

Two successful, local, black businessmen were recruited as mentors. They were identified through established networks within BUILD. They were chosen because it was felt that they had a deep understanding of the issues faced by many of the Life Skills participants having had a similar history and background themselves, and young people would relate to them.

The mentors ran three, two hour sessions for a group of 12 learners over a period of six weeks. Prior to the sessions being delivered the mentoring co-ordinator held several meetings with them to plan each session and agree specific objectives.

A range of topics were covered during the sessions including:

- Mentors' education and training experiences.
- Mentors' successes and disappointments.
- Handling confrontation.
- Life in prison.
- How to say no to drugs.
- Setting up networks.
- The importance of self-belief.
- Keeping the right company.
- The importance of sleep.
- Music and entertainment.

During the sessions both mentors talked freely about their own experiences, how they had dealt with issues such as racism, and overcome obstacles in order to make a success of their own lives. They provided motivation and inspiration to young people to pursue their own goals in life and encouraged them to be what they wanted to be. Young people were given the opportunity to ask questions in a safe environment.

## BENEFITS

The programme was a success, although initially young people were not interested in attending because they could not see what value it would be to them. Young people greatly enjoyed the sessions and Life Skills tutors observed that their concentration levels were considerably higher than

at other times. Typically young people were unable to concentrate for longer than 20 minutes but during these sessions it increased to two hours. Positive comments made by young people following these sessions included:

‘I found mentoring good because the mentors are on the same level as me, they know where I am coming from without me having to explain to them’.

‘I became interested in mentoring because I was able to speak to someone who is doing exactly the same kind of work I want to do’.

Building on the success of the group mentoring programme BESTCO and BUILD are now developing an individual mentoring programme.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Sharing expertise through partnership working.
- Using positive role models with a shared history and background, to motivate and inspire young people.
- The implementation of additional, creative, support mechanisms for young people participating in Life Skills.

**For further information contact:  
Helen Cooper or Deanna Good at BESTCO on 0115 9790 600**

**East Midlands Region**

# Integrating Millennium Volunteers as an option within Life Skills

Integrating Millennium Volunteers as an option within Life Skills has been made possible by the flexibility and support of Rochdale Metropolitan Council's Recreation and Community Services, Millennium Volunteers and Rochdale CCTE.

The Youth Service within Rochdale Metropolitan Council's Recreation and Community Services Division were awarded a new contract to deliver Life Skills in November 1999. Since that time they have offered volunteering opportunities as part of their Life Skills menu of options, through an already established Millennium Volunteers project, managed also from within the Youth Service.

## WHY DID THE ORGANISATION DECIDE TO OFFER VOLUNTEERING AS PART OF ITS LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME?

Dawn Lundegran, the Life Skills worker explained:

'We found that many of the young people with whom we were working did not have the level of maturity or employability skills to hold down a permanent job or placement without a high degree of support. Many also were very unclear about what kind of job they would enjoy doing. We thought that providing opportunities to involve young people in suitable volunteering projects would not only allow them to develop their employability skills in terms of working with others, acting on instructions, arriving on time and presenting themselves in an acceptable manner, but also to gain knowledge of different types of jobs and where appropriate specific job-related skills. Furthermore we believed that it would allow them to increase their confidence and feeling of self-worth through achieving recognition from doing something responsible and of benefit to the community and provide them with alternative ways of spending their free time. It also allowed them to consider the volunteering options available and in turn the wide range of employment opportunities, as many of the young people arrived at Life Skills considering only manufacturing or retail.'

## HOW DOES IT WORK IN PRACTICE?

As part of the scheduled Life Skills programme the Millennium Volunteer development worker presents Millennium Volunteers as an option to the young people on Life Skills. Where appropriate a Millennium Volunteer will be invited to share their experiences with the group.

'It is important that this is done very positively as many of the young people cannot understand the reason for becoming involved in something for which they are not paid. This is probably the most difficult hurdle to overcome. Making the opportunities and benefits sound exciting is the key to success. Real life examples of where young people have benefited and succeeded from the project also encourage young people to become involved'.

**- Kate Kennedy,  
Millennium Volunteer development worker.**

If an individual expresses interest in becoming a volunteer, the Life Skills worker will arrange for them to have an interview with the Millennium Volunteer development worker. During the interview the Millennium Volunteer worker will seek to identify the areas in which the young person is interested in volunteering, and the levels of support that they are likely to require. She will try and match these against a bank of currently available placements or if there is nothing suitable develop an appropriate opportunity. The types of volunteering opportunities in which young people participating in Life Skills have been placed include local community and voluntary organisations and charities.

The amount of time which a young person spends as a volunteer will be dependent upon their personal commitment. The hours that they spend undertaking volunteering does not count towards the minimum 16 hours attendance required for Life Skills as volunteering relies on people giving their time freely. This has not proved an issue

however as the young people who become Millennium Volunteers are usually the ones that are settled in their Life Skills programme and can see the benefits that this extra experience will bring to them in terms of their eventual employability. One young person completed 200 hours of volunteering within a three month period, an amount normally achieved over a year. This generated considerable local media interest when they received the Millennium Volunteers Award of Excellence, signed by the Secretary of State. This further boosted their confidence and led to several invitations to take part in local decision-making groups.

Each Millennium Volunteer has a Volunteer Plan and they receive on-going support, from the Millennium Volunteer worker, through regular visits and phone calls. Weekly discussions also take place with the Life Skills worker. Both the Millennium Volunteer and Life Skills workers are managed within the Youth Service and they keep each other regularly appraised of progress, developments and any issues which may arise through bi-monthly joint staff meetings.

## THE BENEFITS

One person who has benefited from his volunteering experience during Life Skills is Robert. Robert decided to undertake the volunteering option because he was unsure of what vocational area he would like to enter. He was placed in a local environmental project where he was involved in cleaning up local areas within the local community with other volunteers. Robert really enjoyed his experience as a volunteer and through this he

realised that he was good at communicating with young people and leading teams of people. As a result of this and talking with the Youth Workers who were delivering the Life Skills programme, Robert thought that he would like to become a Youth Worker himself. Since completing his Life Skills programme Robert has become employed as an Ancillary Youth Worker and is attending a community education class to develop his numeracy and literacy skills in order that he can progress his newly found ambition to become a Youth Worker. He continues to act as a volunteer and regularly visits the Life Skills programme to talk to young people about the benefits of volunteering.

‘Becoming a Millennium Volunteer whilst I was on my Life Skills programme was one of the best things I’ve ever done. It really helped me understand what I was good at. I got lots of praise and encouragement – something which I never got from the teachers at school. As I result I hated school and left when I was only 14. I am now working as an Ancillary Youth Worker and hope in the future to become a Youth Worker. I’m sure that if I had not participated in Life Skills and Millennium Volunteers I would never have had this chance in life’.

**- Robert**

The partnership working has enabled development workers to highlight gaps in local provision such as informal counselling provision for young people. This is now being addressed through consultation with young people from both projects. Hopefully this will lead to suitable provision being put in place which will benefit a wider community of young people.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Providing volunteering as a Life Skills option to develop learners’ skills.
- Integration with Millennium Volunteers project.
- Partnership working which has resulted in the identification of gaps in provision for young people locally which are now being addressed.

### For further information contact:

**Dawn Lundegran at Rochdale MBC Recreation and Community Services Division  
on 01706 867 309.**

**North West Region**

## **A Life Skills provider meeting the needs of pregnant teenagers**

Tamcos Training Ltd in St. Helens offers a specialised Life Skills option for teenage women who are pregnant. They are the only organisation in the area which offers this facility. Young women are referred to Tamcos from St. Helens Careers Service which has assigned a specialist Personal Adviser to work with them. Tamcos also receive referrals from other training providers who run work based learning programmes in the local area.

With the support of St. Helens CCTE Tamcos has been delivering a motherhood programme for the last four years. The service was greatly needed in the local area and up to 30 young women have successfully participated each year. When Life Skills was introduced as part of the Learning Gateway, it was agreed that the motherhood programme would become one of the options within Life Skills.

Young women can be referred to the programme at any time during their pregnancy. Usually they will remain on the programme until the 29<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy when they can then claim maternity benefit. In some instances, where they have not fulfilled their development plan, they will stay on the programme beyond this providing that they have a doctor's note to confirm that they are well enough to attend.

Within the motherhood option young women learn to develop a range of skills and knowledge. This includes: healthy eating and exercise during pregnancy; the development of a baby during pregnancy; problems which may arise during pregnancy, preparing for the birth; child development from 0 – 5 years; feeding and caring for a baby; first aid; health and safety in the home; planning and furnishing a nursery and setting up a home. They also attend a series of parent-craft classes at the local hospital and take part in aqua-natal classes at the local swimming baths.

Pregnant young women not only have the choice of undertaking the motherhood option but other Life Skills options too. Tamcos offers a range of options which are also open to other young people. This includes work tasters; basic skills development; sessions on confidence building; assertiveness; problem solving; drugs awareness; homelessness; making occupational choices; planning future training and learning; job search and mainstream options. Pregnant young women are fully integrated with other young people in the delivery of these options. Many pregnant young women face accommodation issues during their pregnancy and advice and support is provided on a one-to-one basis.

### **BENEFITS**

The programme provides a much needed service to prepare young women for motherhood. As Mahala Swift, of Tamcos explained:

‘Many of the young women who attend the motherhood option are only 16 years old. Their knowledge is obviously very limited in terms of pregnancy, childbirth and bringing up a small baby. They need to be adequately prepared for this. Not all will have a supportive home environment and they need additional support. Often this may mean helping them find suitable accommodation in order that they can live independently.

We find that by bringing a group of pregnant teenagers together they are able to provide invaluable support and companionship to each other. A young pregnant teenager can feel very out-of-touch with their own group of friends who are not in the same position as them. The group happily share their experience of attending hospital appointments and the plans which they

are making for their child. They feel more confident in attending parent-craft classes at the hospital as a group, than they would do on their own, where they may feel isolated from other mums-to-be due to their age.

Many of the young women return to visit us after they have had their babies. We never cease to be amazed at how well many of them appear to cope after the birth and they will often say that this is as a result of the motherhood programme which they undertook with us'.

One young mother who has benefited from attending the Life Skills motherhood option is Clare. Clare was part way through an NVQ level 2 in catering at a local College when she found out that she was pregnant. Whilst attending Life Skills Clare encountered difficulties at home and decided that she wanted to find a place of her own. With support and advice from both her Life Skills tutor at Tamcos and her Personal Adviser she moved initially into temporary accommodation and then secured a council house. She completed her Life Skills programme when she was 29 weeks pregnant and left to have her baby. Clare's Personal Adviser has continued to keep in touch with her since. Clare's baby is now ten weeks old and she is making plans to return to college to complete her NVQ level 2 and hopefully continue on to level 3.

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Provision of specialised Life Skills option to support young women who are pregnant.
- Additional options available to develop young people's skills.
- Continued support from Personal Adviser post-Life Skills.

**For further information contact:  
Mahala Swift at Tamcos on 01744 735 549.**

**North West Region**

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## **‘Andrew’**

Andrew felt victimised and picked on at school by both pupils and teachers and as a result was a regular non-attender. His personal appearance affected his self-confidence and self-esteem. Eventually his mother decided that he should stop attending school and he therefore lost the opportunity to take any exams.

Andrew currently lives with his mother and sister. Since moving to the town where he now lives, he has changed his address several times and consequently has not formed any close friendships with people of his own age. He has obtained work on several occasions but due to his low level of confidence he has not been able to hold down employment for very long.

Andrew entered the Learning Gateway in May 2000 and within two weeks joined Life Skills. His Personal Adviser from CareerLink felt that he would benefit from this as it would put him into contact with other people of a similar age group, which would develop his social skills and confidence level initially.

To begin with Andrew was extremely withdrawn, used limited eye contact and could barely communicate with his peers and tutors. Over a period of time, and through extensive support and mentoring from his Personal Adviser and tutors, Andrew began to relax and become less withdrawn. He needed constant reassurance and encouragement but eventually a trusting relationship was established. He became more willing to participate in training activities and receptive to considering future opportunities.

Andrew's Life Skills programme benefited him by allowing him the flexibility to progress at his own pace as well as offering him a variety of options for him to pursue. This created a less pressurised situation for Andrew than if he had been following a set programme.

As Andrew's confidence increased he began to take part in a variety of workshops and activities. These included: creative writing, introduction to IT and the internet, a CLAIT course, a driving skills course, running a successful business course and work experience in animal care. All this combined, enhanced his social skills and gave him a feeling of worth and positive direction for the future. He eventually decided that he wanted to pursue a career in Business Administration, feeling that it was an area in which he could progress and develop.

After 15 weeks on Life Skills Andrew was transferred to a mainstream training programme as a category B endorsed learner. He is now enjoying working full-time at the local council, and has started working towards his NVQ level one in Business Administration. He has recently been nominated for a local 'Trainee of the Year Award' in recognition of the outstanding progress that he has made.

Andrew's hopes and aspirations for the future are to continue developing his knowledge and building up his qualifications in the field of Business Administration. His ultimate goal is to run a successful business of his own.

Andrew's view of his Life Skills programme:

'It's transformed my life completely. I am not the same person anymore. I'm more positive'.



## ‘Ermal’

Ermal, aged 17, was a Kosovan refugee. He belonged to a dissident protest organisation in his home nation, but his personal troubles began at school, where Ermal burned the school's Serbian flag. He claims he was arrested and beaten by Serbian police. His father also beat him, and took him out of school. Ermal was too scared to leave home and wander the streets, for fear of getting shot by the Serbians. Eventually, Ermal fled by hiding in a lorry on its way to Britain. Initially homeless in London, he gained a refugee's permit to remain in Britain and he moved to a hostel. Months later his stepbrother came over to join him and they both moved to Leeds in early 2000. Ermal met with a Careers Adviser, who referred him to a Personal Adviser at Opex Plus.

Ermal's most immediate need to be addressed was his housing situation, as the flat shared by Ermal and his stepbrother was far from adequate, and the two of them were not getting on. Ermal also felt extremely isolated due to the fact that he missed his family; was in a strange country with different customs and practices; and despite being able to speak some broken English, he still had great difficulties understanding people.

Ermal's Personal Adviser accompanied him to the Housing Advice Centre on several occasions. The language barrier meant that her actual presence was vital. She helped Ermal fill in application forms, and wrote letters of support explaining Ermal's unique situation. She took him to Little London Area Housing Office, which allocated a flat for Ermal. She subsequently set up his accounts with the fuel and water boards, and contacted Saint Jude's Furniture Centre which was able to deliver reconditioned furniture to Ermal's flat for no charge. For the more expensive items, such as a cooker, the Personal Adviser liaised with the Refugee Council and Social Services, who suggested that Ermal apply for a Community Care Grant.

Unfortunately, the Community Care Grant did not materialise. To counter this, the Personal Adviser referred Ermal to Leeds Independent Living Team (LILT) who could take over his tenancy and give help with decorating and budgeting, as well as more general long-term support. Ermal mentioned to his PA that his neighbours in Little London were noisy and disruptive, so LILT were contacted and they arranged for him to be transferred to another LILT tenancy in Headingley.

Once housing and related support had been established, the Personal Adviser introduced the idea of training. Ermal was unsure about his choice of vocation, so it was arranged for him to attend an interview with a Careers Adviser: he decided to try hairdressing. He was thus referred to the Assessment Team in Opex plus, who found him a placement with Spring Skills in Leeds city centre. This has proved a successful move for Ermal, who is due to complete his NVQ level 1 in November 2000. He hopes to continue with an NVQ level 2, and has enrolled with a local college to study Gents' Hairdressing one night each week. The Assessment Team has helped Ermal access an ESOL (English as Second Language) course.

Ermal's Personal Adviser has liaised with a solicitor, to ensure that his application for a British passport is being processed. As such, this is just one example of the continuous advocacy provided by the Personal Adviser. Ermal needed to contact numerous agencies to ensure a secure lifestyle, but this would have been impossible on his own due to his language barrier and unfamiliarity with British laws, rights and procedures. The Personal Adviser provided the essential support and consulted him regularly for his ideas, enabling him to become independent, rather than simply leading him by the hand. The Personal Adviser suggested counselling as an option, due to the turbulent events in Ermal's recent life, but he did not take it up. The regular consultations with a single familiar and unthreatening person, the Personal Adviser, enabled Ermal to create the security necessary from which he could start rebuilding his life.

## **‘Paul’**

Paul was a poor attender at school particularly in years ten and eleven due to his lack of commitment. He did manage to achieve some GCSE qualifications but probably would have done better if he had been more motivated.

Paul’s parents were separated and he had been living with his father who asked him to leave home because he had dropped out of college, got mixed up with the wrong people and had little idea of what he wanted to do with his life. He lived from one friend’s floor to another, and had no financial resources to get a flat for himself. He had a known drug problem and regularly smoked cannabis.

Paul had dropped out of a Sport Science course at College shortly after starting. He then undertook a skill sampling course at College, to try plastering, but again dropped out of this. Throughout this time however he maintained an interest in butchery.

Paul started Life Skills in November 1999. His commitment, attendance, punctuality and literacy skills all needed to be addressed along with his attitude problem.

Paul was set very short-term goals to achieve. He was given the incentive of gaining a work-placement in butchery on achieving a certain level of attendance and commitment, alongside working towards a Wordpower certificate which he subsequently achieved.

On achievement of his goals Paul was placed with a local abattoir for three days per week. He enjoyed this immensely and his placement was increased to four and a half days per week. Paul became very committed to his placement which was shown by his improved attitude and timekeeping. He started work at 6.30am each day and received excellent reports from his employer. After attending his work-placement for only five weeks Paul was offered full-time employment, where he continues to work and progress. Paul has been reconciled with his father and is now living again with him after demonstrating a more mature and responsible attitude.

‘Life Skills has given me the chance to prove to myself and others that I can be successful and continue to be successful in the future’.

**- Paul**

## ‘Richard’

Richard is 17 and lives with his mother and grandparents. He is very mature for his age and since his father’s death, has taken on his role within the family. He is very introverted, and does not mix well with people his own age, preferring the company of adults. Richard has a speech impediment which makes it difficult sometimes for people to understand what he is saying. He is also dyslexic. Both of these have had a major effect on his self-esteem and confidence and as a result he did not attend school regularly and only achieved low grades in his GCSE qualifications.

Richard was referred to YMCA Training’s Life Skills programme in March 2000. It was identified that he needed support in developing his confidence and help with communication and writing. He also needed to develop his social skills so that he could relate better to his peer group. Richard was eager to gain full-time employment so that he could obtain money to support his family. He had no idea of the type of job he would like apart from working in a factory. Guidance in identifying a suitable vocational option was therefore required.

A training programme was developed for Richard which would address his specific needs. This included attending sessions on confidence building, assertiveness and writing skills. One of the projects that Richard was involved in was writing a play with another learner. This helped him improve his writing skills and also helped him in developing a positive relationship with a member of his own peer group. The play was subsequently performed to a local audience and Richard played one of the

leading characters. Richard was also invited to talk on local radio about the play. His confidence increased greatly and as a result his speech impediment considerably diminished.

During the course of his training programme it emerged that Richard had exceptionally strong IT skills and enjoyed working on the computer. Richard was completely unaware of his strengths in this area. His tutor encouraged him to consider a career in this area, discussing with him how he could best pursue this. Richard decided that he wanted to enrol full-time at a local College to undertake an AS level qualification in Information Technology and to re-sit his GCSEs in Maths and English. He realised that if he gained formal qualifications he would have better access to a career in IT, and ultimately be in a better position to financially support his family.

After having attended his Life Skills programme for 27 weeks Richard commenced his college course in September 2000. The local TEC allowed him to remain on his Life Skills programme until the new college term started as YMCA Training were worried that if there was a gap he may change his mind. His tutor helped him complete his application form, prepare for interview and went with him to enrol at College.

Richard is now enjoying his college course and coping well. He has made new friends and now finds it much easier to get on with people his own age. His confidence has increased greatly and his speech is considerably improved.

## ‘Sarah’

Sarah, aged 16, was referred to OPEX Plus in Leeds in January 2000. She had left her mother's home to live with her grandparents because her stepfather was making life difficult. Sarah was receiving sickness benefit due to long-term depression. Sarah's depression was the result of her father's death, when she was ten, and serious and consistent bullying over a four year period, whilst she was at secondary school. She had not attended school regularly since she was 12, had not associated with many of her peers and had gained no educational qualifications.

Sarah's needs were identified as a lack of confidence, not just in her academic skills but also in her ability to work with other people. She believed that being on long term sickness benefit was not improving her self-esteem and she wanted to commence a training programme as soon as possible. She agreed with her Personal Adviser that this was going to be a big leap. She had started a training programme previously but it had not worked out.

Sarah had expressed an interest in sport and therefore it was decided to refer her to the Sporting Chance Life Skills option, based at Leeds Metropolitan University. While she was waiting for the course to start her Personal Adviser referred her to the Learning Plus option for her to address her literacy and numeracy needs. Once on the

Sporting Chance option Sarah excelled, gaining awards in first aid and community sports leadership. As a result of her commitment to the course Sarah was offered a temporary placement at the University Sports Department. Sarah gained valuable experience at a sports centre by shadowing personnel who were staffing the actual facilities, and also working on the administrative/reception side. The Department Manager, Sporting Chance Manager and her Personal Adviser met with her on a regular basis to monitor and review her progress. Gradually her increasing confidence became more obvious.

During the time that she was on placement Sarah began to consider independent living. Her Personal Adviser provided information on the different options available and discussed with her the pros and cons of each situation. In the end, Sarah decided to move back home with her mother.

As she was coming to the end of her placement Sarah's Personal Adviser provided careers information and advice and discussed her options. She referred Sarah to the Options to Employment programme to help her with job searching and after a few weeks Sarah was successful in obtaining a job as a Care Assistant with the elderly. As she remained interested in the sports/leisure industry, she has decided to enrol on a National Lifeguard Qualification course, one evening per week at the University.

## ‘Stephanie’

Stephanie was referred to the Electric Palace’s Life Skills programme by Prospects Careers Service as she was deemed to be ‘at risk’. Her partner was a heroin addict, had recently left his young family and was ten years older than she. Although she had a good relationship with her mother it was apparent that no boundaries had ever been set for her. She had been a poor attender whilst still at school and had gained few academic qualifications.

Stephanie had not worked, or taken part in training or further education, since she had left school. She lacked motivation and found it very difficult to get up in the morning. Her needs were identified as motivation, timekeeping, attendance, basic skills and employability skills.

Stephanie attended the Electric Palace to work on her basic skills and IT skills. Initially she found timekeeping a problem because of her lack of responsibility. Her programme was adjusted to ease her into attending morning sessions. Gradually her hours were increased and her timekeeping improved.

She was given support and advice on sexual matters and contraception from the Health Counsellor. Medical checks were arranged for her and again she was given support when she attended these.

A placement was arranged for Stephanie at a local day care centre for the elderly. She participated in all aspects of the running of the centre which included feeding, bathing and supporting the elderly on day trips. Stephanie excelled at the placement, proving to be very patient and establishing a real rapport with everyone at the centre.

After 12 weeks on Life Skills Stephanie gained a job as a care assistant at a nursing home. She is coping well with the work and proving a good team member. She has taken on shift work which she feels suits her well. Stephanie is glad she participated in Life Skills as she feels that it prepared her for starting work and gave her the confidence and experience to apply for jobs in the area she wanted.

## ‘Phil’

Phil, aged 20, was referred to Rathbone’s Life Skills programme in Runcorn by the probation service. He had a history of involvement in crime, with previous convictions for actual and grievous bodily harm. Phil comes from a family which has a number of social problems and has not had the support he needed.

When Phil first joined Rathbone he was unfocused, demotivated, lacked confidence, and displayed aggressive and challenging behaviour. Further to an intensive period of initial assessment, staff at Rathbone identified that Phil would benefit from participating in the Life Skills programme working on anger management, time management, confidence building, careers guidance and job search. As Phil progressed with his individual learning plan and gained more confidence, his training adviser identified that he would benefit from participating in some job tasters. This was arranged within the Rathbone joinery department where Phil was able to gain experience in the workshop in a number of different areas. He also completed his RSA CLAIT qualification.

Throughout his training Phil was given one to one support by his training adviser to ensure that he did not digress from his individual training plan and that his particular needs were met. Regular contact was also maintained with his probation officer who was involved in his weekly progress reviews.

Phil made significant progress during his Life Skills programme. He gained confidence, was more determined to keep a job, was able to control his aggression and did not re-offend during his time on the programme. Due to his progress Phil successfully secured employment in a local factory where he has sustained employment for the last three months. He has recently started a qualification in forklift truck driving.

‘Life Skills has helped me a lot to deal with my anger and aggression. Before I joined Rathbone I did not really want to do anything and I believed that I would never get a job. Now I am working and I feel better about things’.

- Phil

## ‘Ilan’

Ilan was referred to Rathbone’s Life Skills programme in Wigan by the Careers Service. He lives at home with his parents both of whom are teachers. They are extremely supportive to Ilan, and have high expectations of him. He is regularly compared to his older brother who has done very well academically and is currently studying law at university. This has had a negative impact on Ilan and he has developed a rebellious attitude towards his parents and does not wish to conform to their wishes. Ilan had below average attendance at school and often played truant. He achieved E’s and F’s in his GCSE’s and this has contributed to his lack in self-esteem and self-belief.

When Ilan first joined Rathbone he was not sure about what he wanted to do. He displayed aggressive and challenging behaviour, needed intensive support with his literacy and numeracy, had poor time keeping, lacked confidence and was demotivated with being out of training and employment for so long. His Personal Advisor had identified some of these training needs, however during further initial assessment Rathbone identified that Ilan was clearly demotivated and lacked direction.

Further to his initial assessment and induction, an individual learning plan was drawn up for Ilan which included job search, basic skills, anger management, timekeeping, confidence building and communication skills.

During his training Ilan was involved in a series of exercises which were geared to improving his confidence. Regular contact was maintained with his Personal Adviser who was also involved in his regular progress reviews with him and his Training Adviser. The outcomes of his reviews helped to inform his training plan. As Ilan progressed with his training he expressed an interest in working in retail. A work placement was arranged for him at Kwik Save, an empathetic employer, where he gained experience for up to three days a week. Regular contact was maintained with the placement to ensure that Ilan was progressing. After six weeks Ilan was offered a full-time work placement where he was given the opportunity to work towards his NVQ level 1 in retail.

Ilan made significant progress as a result of his Life Skills programme. He gained confidence, the ability to communicate more effectively with others, he became more focused on what he wanted to do, his timekeeping improved and he successfully attended his placement. He has now finished his Life Skills programme and has progressed on to Rathbone’s youth training programme where is working towards his NVQ .

Ilan feels that Life Skills has “helped me to try out a job, as I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do and now I really like it and am looking forward to getting on with my NVQ.”

## **‘John’**

John, aged 17, was living in a local hostel when he joined Learning Gateway. His parents had split up and he had until recently been living with his father and sister in Manchester. His mother lived in Scotland with several other siblings. John had attended a number of special schools for short periods of time but had gained no educational qualifications.

John had been involved in petty crimes, several of which came to light whilst he was participating in his Life Skills programme, due to warrants being issued in Scotland for his arrest. He had no friends and desperately wanted someone to show interest in him. Some people in the past had taken advantage of this. He had dabbled with drugs mainly due to the company he had become involved with. He was both naive and vulnerable.

John was linked with a Personal Adviser from East Lancashire Careers Service who worked with him to identify his needs and the support which he required. Finding suitable accommodation was a major concern and this needed to be addressed before he could consider moving forward. This involved working with a local support agency ‘The Stable’ which provided him with temporary accommodation. John’s Personal Adviser also arranged for him to receive counselling and befriending from another local support agency, Maundy Grange.

John joined Life Skills in March 2000. He took part in a range of activities to address his identified needs including a motivation for success programme, healthy living, information technology, work tasters and the development of social and employability skills. He attended two outward bound programmes to assist with the development of his skills. John’s timetable virtually involved the provision of 24 hour care as he required constant supervision, companionship and attention. He had the habit of disappearing to various parts of the country and phoning staff to ask them to collect him.

John’s progress was regularly reviewed between his provider, Personal Adviser, Social Worker and Counsellor. All parties felt this to be extremely beneficial as so many issues needed to be addressed simultaneously.

After four months John was offered accommodation in a family home. The family were able to provide him with additional help and support which meant that he relied less on his Personal Adviser and staff at the Life Skills programme. John began to make a new life and in October 2000 he transferred to a mainstream training programme for endorsed young people. His Personal Adviser continues to monitor his progress and visits him regularly at his new training provider.



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